

Advocacy Journalism: Writing For Charity

The Writing For Pleasure Centre – Ross Young

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Principle(s) in focus:

1. Purposeful and authentic writing projects

Aims:

We decided to create this writing project to help increase children's motivation. We hoped that children would be motivated because the project had a genuine purpose and real audience at its heart. They knew why they were writing and they were writing to make a positive change.

Description:



This half term our writing project was advocacy journalism. Advocacy journalism is obviously when you advocate for something. It means you champion it, support it and try and stand up for it. In our first week, we discussed this genre using our **genre-booklet**. To

make the writing truly purposeful, the school contributed a charity grant fund worth £150 to a JustGiving page and invited the parent community to top this up, which in the end raised well over £300.

Over half term, we asked the children to talk with their families and choose a local charity, organisation or cause that was worthwhile or important to them. They then had to research details of the charity and bring their information into school. They even had to phone up or visit their charity to try and get a quote – some of them did remarkably well with this. We explained that the grant money would be given away to three winners. Depending on the focus, each article was placed into one of three categories:

- Helping people
- Helping animals
- Helping the environment

The articles were presented to a group of Year 6 pupils who were asked to determine which pieces were the most effective in informing, persuading and providing a personal touch. The three winning pieces received a share of the grant money. All the children sent their articles off to their charities. The three winners also included a cheque.

Choosing a charity

We were struck by the sheer variety and personal commitment to different local charities. We had originally proposed a list of charities the children *could* potentially use but found, much to our surprise, this wasn't necessary. A great many children were able to choose charities that their family had been directly involved with or received help from. This was lovely and made writing the pieces even more genuine.

Our writing-study lessons were good but we also learnt what to do next time.

As we always do when introducing a writing project, we wrote a couple of examples ourselves. I wrote about a local charity which supported my sister during her brain injury, whilst my colleague wrote about a local animal sanctuary. In both cases, we interviewed someone connected to the charity; this was also a requirement for the children to do as part of their homework.

What became clear was that this was a multi-faceted genre. It required us (and therefore the children) to negotiate aspects of informing and persuading as well as recounting a small anecdote relating to the charity. After discussing at our exemplar texts, the children were shown a terrible example of what NOT to do when

How To Write An Advocacy Journalism Report

Why write a piece of advocacy journalism? To let your readers know about an organisation that you think is worthwhile.
When you advocate for something it means you champion it, you support it and you try and stand up for it. If you choose to write an advocacy article, you will learn how to take notes, do interviews and write a nice persuasive report people will want to read. You will often see these kinds of articles in newspapers, magazines and websites. You can write about human, animal or environmental problems.
1. Think! What your text is going to be about
Give your readers information about the organisation. What it is, where it is and its aims.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocacy journalism pieces are best when you choose a charity you have been involved with yourself!• What is the problem they are trying to make better?• What does the organisation do?• Explain what activities they have coming up, what their staff are like and how they raise money.• Give a personal story about something the charity has done, appeal to your reader's emotions.• End your piece by providing some contact details so people can get involved.
2. Think! Your role as the writer
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• At the end of your piece, persuade your reader to find out more, take part or donate money.• Tell your readers how they can be involved, say "you" "You can get help by..."• Use a real anecdote from your experience of the charity to really add a personal touch to your piece. It could be amusing, sad or inspirational - but tell it almost like a story to bring your reader in.• Ask your reader a question about the subject of the charity and then go on to answer it.
3. Imagine! What it looks like
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The piece can be multimedia. Use pictures, photographs, diagrams, maps, logos, fact and figures for interest.• Use quotation marks when giving a quote from any experts from the charity!
4. (Semantics!) Keeping your reader on track
Write in the
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1st person. Write as a reporter. Use "I", "What I did", "What I saw", "Who I met..."• Most of your report will be written in the present tense, for example when you are writing about what the charity is doing now.• You will write in the past tense when you describe what you saw and did.
5. (Lexis) Word choices
You will need time connectives. These will allow time to pass in your report. Time connectives make sure it has a speedy pace and doesn't get boring.

writing theirs. This was a worthwhile lesson as we could see some of the children's plans were looking very similar to this bad example! Finally, our functional-grammar mini-lessons focused on the use of direct quotation and modal verbs, but also ventured into discussion of moving between informing and persuading and using formal and informal tone.

Impact:

The children were highly motivated by the project and felt a responsibility to write their article to the best of their abilities. The school community got to learn about a variety of local charities. The charities themselves were very grateful to receive the articles from the children. Raising the money and involving the parent community also made them feel part of the project too. I think what was most pleasing for me was that the children learnt that by writing effectively and meaningfully, you can make a difference using words.

Below is one of the winning entries:

Having Two Left Feet

Steps is a charity which helps people with talipes (their feet facing the wrong way). Steps is based in Warrington, Cheshire but they cover the whole of the UK.

Baby steps can be doubly hard without Steps - so what can make some people's feet happier?

The problem is that children with talipes can't run or walk so they can't enjoy games like other people. Children with talipes have no mental issue - the stop sign is in their feet. That's why we can get sad, mad and even angry. Children with talipes can lead miserable lives with no friends to play with. Laughter will not be heard while they are moving about. It's like having superglue on your feet, sticking them in different positions.

You can't get in to the swing with talipes without getting stuck on the trapeze.

Think about it, you may be laughing now but would you like it if it happened to you? Steps make sure that those affected by childhood leg conditions are fully looked after from diagnosis to treatment. The staff will always help you at Steps, even if you are screaming and shouting to the sky. The staff are nice and very helpful. They are managed by sensible people and get the job done. That charity is funded by people doing charity activities for them (running, mountain climbing and skydiving) or through businesses giving them money.

I was born with talipes in both feet. I had to go to appointments loads of times and was having happiness drained out of me by it. The word 'walk' sent shivers down my spine. Friends don't tend to want to play with a penguin or pigeon boy. Steps gave advice to my parents about what to do, which items to give me, and what I had to do.

I believe in Steps. Steps were determined to help me get my feet in shape. They gave me special boots to fix my feet and without them I wouldn't be walking, dancing and having the marvellous times I now have.

When you do charity events for Steps, you will increase the chance for children to walk, dance or run without two left feet.

To make people happy, visit Steps' website at: www.steps-charity.prg.uk

I hope you enjoy your parallel footed day - I know I will!

Reflection:

I want to continue looking for writing projects which serve genuine purposes and audiences and show children the things their writing can do.

References:

Genre Booklets can be found here: <https://literacyforpleasure.wordpress.com/2016/12/10/introducing-our-genre-booklets-to-the-class-its-impact/>