

Lesson 4

Taking a Stand

Objective

- To discover the need for both clarity and reason in presenting a personal position on a relevant issue

Notes to the Teacher

The ability to express an opinion clearly and give logical reasons for it is important for effective participation in society. Whether in a letter to a congressman, at a PTA meeting, at a meeting with the principal, or in a discussion with a fellow worker or friend, people need to express themselves with clarity and reason if they want to convince others of their opinions.

In this lesson, students are asked to write and explain their opinions on a real issue about which they, as a group, feel strongly. In the discussion that follows, they will see that vague and illogical writing fails to achieve its purpose. To facilitate making comparisons and pointing out relationships to composition skills, it is advisable for the entire class to write on one issue.

Procedure

1. Ask students to suggest topics for serious consideration. List them on the board; then have students vote to select the one they would like to discuss. The topic should be one that elicits strong positive and/or negative responses such as the legal drinking age, a particular school policy, or the speed limit.
2. Have students use **Handout 5** to organize their thoughts and to write letters to appropriate authorities (student council president, newspaper editor, school principal, mayor, senator, etc.) stating and explaining their positions on the issue.

3. Ask partners to share and analyze their letters using the following questions:
 - a. Does the letter make a definite statement of what the writer believes?
 - b. Has the writer given at least three reasons to support his or her belief?
 - c. Can I clearly understand his or her line of reasoning?
 - d. Are the viewpoint and reasons believable and convincing? Why or why not?
4. Allow students a short period of time to make any changes they wish in their letters.
5. Ask small groups to share letters and to select the best one from each group for presentation to the class.
6. Have students present the selected letters either orally or on an opaque projector. Point out the ways that each reflects clear use of reasons to support a position.
7. Have students vote on the best letter. Ask the writer to type the letter at home and to mail it to the addressed audience. Instruct the writer to inform the class of any replies received concerning the letter.

Taking a Stand on an Issue

Directions: When the class has decided on the issue, write a letter to an appropriate person using this brief outline to organize your thoughts.

Issue: _____

My Position: _____

Reasons: _____

Dear _____ :

Sincerely,
