

From:
Mrs Pauline Barratt

Traditionally persuasive essay writing has been formally introduced at around year 5, though not formally assessed until later, as it is a very complex writing genre. Expecting children in year 3 to write a persuasive essay as part of the NAPLAN Literacy Test is ludicrous. It is developmentally inappropriate. We need to stand up for our 7/8 year olds and stop them being used and abused in the national obsession to gather data.

It will become incumbent on year two teachers to teach persuasive essay writing at a time when teachers are trying to encourage students to write at length, to develop a love of writing and to address grammar, punctuation and spelling in their writing. In order to develop skilled writers teachers work in contexts which are real and meaningful for students. These children are 7 years old. The genres treated; recounts, (Students write about things they have actually experienced) procedures, (Students write about something they have just done) narratives (Students write in a format they have listened to, read and have been told stories through their early years) and reports (Students have the opportunity to research the material before writing). Other forms letters, invitations etc are also covered.

Persuasive arguments requiring, opinions backed up with evidence, taking a position and backing it up with argument is beyond the developmental capabilities of students in year 2 and early year 3. None the less teachers will be pressured into teaching this genre despite the fact that we know it is age inappropriate and will waste valuable teaching learning time which could be used to develop students writing skills with suitable genres.

Given that persuasive writing is too difficult for younger children, adjusting the marking to take their skill level into account is a nonsense. To expect any student in primary school to write a persuasive essay in a 35 minute time frame with no discussion or preparation is a nonsense in itself.

We should not be wasting our precious teaching time and students learning time trying to get them to write persuasively when they are clearly developmentally not ready.

Persuasive writing is an important writing skill that students will certainly need later in their schooling. Leave it til then. It is not appropriate for students in year 2/3 to be focussing on this genre.

Teachers will be directed to focus on persuasive writing and in fact will owe it to our students to do so if Naplan requires it.

I am truly stunned that The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Council could ever have proposed that persuasive writing be used as the assessment writing genre.

I am similarly amazed that the State Education Ministers would sign off on such a proposal.

Please, Please, Please could someone consult with teachers in ordinary classrooms before plunging us into chaos.

I am really sad. I know that I will be forced to do something that as a teacher I know is counterproductive. As a parent I don't want children put under any more pressure than they already are under due to NAPLAN.

Yours faithfully,

Pauline Barratt