

Science at the White House

Lesson Title: Science at the White House

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When President Obama declared that he wanted to once again make the White House a host for public education on culture and pressing issues of the day, he opened the door to all Americans, students in particular, to get involved. Obama said that he would like to bring science back to the White House and elevate its stature through a White House lecture series for the general public. Your assignment is to help him decide which types of science should be brought to the national stage by writing a letter in which you suggest the science area assigned to you as a topic for a lecture. Your teacher will assign the topic to you. In order to write the letter, you can use the list of resources found on the Science at the White House student E-Sheet (<http://sciencenetlinks.com/Esheet.cfm?DocID=213>).

As you are conducting research on your topic and preparing a draft of your letter, answer the following questions in your science notebook or journal. You will use the answers to these questions to help you write your letter.

1. Pretend you are explaining this science to your eight-year-old brother or sister. How would you describe this science?
2. Why is this science an important topic for our nation today?
3. What are two to three contributions that discoveries in this science have made to our world?
4. What is a counter argument that someone could make against this scientific topic being discussed at the White House?
5. What are two to three new research projects that scientists in this field are working on?
6. How can this science help our country/world in the future?

Your teacher has explained to you what a persuasive letter is and how the information gathered should help you to make a convincing argument for why your science topic is the right choice. Persuasive writing attempts to convince the reader that the point of view or course of action recommended by the writer is valid. It is important that the writer understand other sides of the position so that the strongest information to counter the others can be presented. In the letter, only one side of the issue is presented.

Here is a suggested format for the persuasive letter:

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- The topic sentence should be a statement of position. That position must be clear and direct. The next sentence can explain what you have recently learned about President Obama's interest in science and discussing it at the White House. You may decide to use the Year of Science 2009 theme as rationale for conducting the science forums now. A third sentence can explain the science in plain language.
- In the next paragraph, state the three best reasons that you have to support your position. Make sure that you have the evidence to support the three reasons you choose.
- In the body of the essay, use specific evidence, examples, and statistics and not broad generalizations or personal opinions to persuade the reader that the stated position is a valid one. A topic sentence for each support paragraph explains why this point is important and additional sentences help to support it. This way, the logic of the argument is easy to follow.
- Be sure to use adequate transitions between paragraphs as they make it easier for the reader to follow the logic of the presentation.
- To conclude your letter, explain why you are writing it (you think it's important that President Obama consider this topic for discussion at the White House) and restate your most compelling evidence cited in original form. Remember, this is the last chance to remind the reader and convince him/her to accept the writer's position.

You will work with your group to research, write, and present your persuasive letter to the class. Your letter will be graded on these points:

- Does the letter clearly explain the type of science suggested and the purpose for the letter?
- Does the letter make a compelling case for why this type of science would be a good choice for a White House discussion?
- Does the letter use well-constructed transitions to bridge from one point to the next?
- Does the letter summarize its main points in a strong conclusion?