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Are Dogs Better Than Cats?: Teaching Oral & Written Persuasion Skills

Sara Mathis

University of Nevada, Las Vegas, sara.mathis@unlv.edu

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The practice and the need it addresses

Rationale:

First generation students often come into UNLV underprepared for the rigors of speaking and writing. Student’s success in their courses and future careers depend on their abilities to persuade through oral and written skills.

Tool: C-E-R Model

The Claim-Evidence-Reasoning model asks students to:

- 1) **Make a Claim:** A statement of a student’s understanding about a phenomenon. (Thesis and Topic Sentences)
- 2) **Provide Evidence:** Use sufficient, appropriate, and scholarly research to support claim. (Supporting Examples)
- 3) **Demonstrate Reasoning:** Ties together the claim and the evidence through reasoning by example, analogy, authority, cause, or correlation. (Justification)

Example:

Students take an instructor made outline of a persuasive essay or speech and through reverse engineering, build the argumentative components into a visual outline.

Dogs Make Better Pets Than Cats

| | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Sub Claim | Sub Claim | Sub Claim |
| Evidence | Evidence | Evidence |
| Reasoning | Reasoning | Reasoning |

Evidence this practice benefits UNLV Students

First-generation students:

Approximately 60% of freshman enrollees across Southern Nevada are first generation students of varying skill levels. The C-E-R model can be scaffolded for all writing and speaking levels. This is beneficial because professors can meet students at the level they are at and use the model to advance their skills.

Teacher Observations:

- #1: Students distinguish better between informative speaking/writing vs. persuasive oral/written skills.
- #2: Arguments made by students are more complete, logical, and thorough.
- #3: Students make more sophisticated arguments.
- #4: Students feel more confident turning their opinions into arguments.

Student Comments:

- The C-E-R model taught me how to make an argument I can support when my ideas conflict with others.
- I use this method any time I have to write a paper or make a presentation.
- The C-E-R model is easy to remember and follow—not like formal reasoning models
- I get better grades when I apply this model to the speeches I give in my other classes.

Resources and where to find them

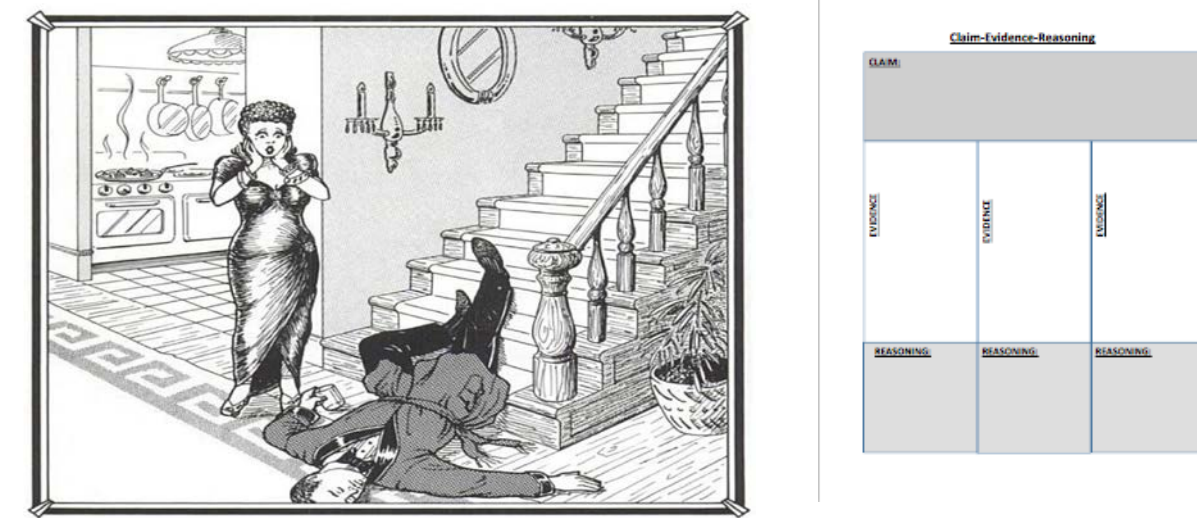
Readings on C-E-R:

www.activatelearning.com/claim-evidence-reasoning/

Hillocks, G. (2011). *Teaching Argument Writing, Grades 6-12: Supporting Claims with Relevant Evidence and Clear Reasoning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Instructions:

Use a fun warm up exercise like the murder mystery called Slip or Trip?



Students make a claim about who the killer is, find evidence for that claim, and develop reasoning that demonstrates how the evidence supports the claim.

THEN

1. Develop an argument that is researchable, relevant to your subject area, but simplistic.
2. Write a main claim, 3 sub claims, 3 pieces of evidence that match your sub claims, and then 3 summaries of the reasoning for why the evidence supports the claim.
3. In large font, type the claims, evidence, and reasoning onto separate sheets of paper. Shuffle the order and make 1 copy for each group. Gather packets and tape.
4. Ask students to find overall claim and tape it to the wall, then ask them to find sub claims, match evidence, and reasoning until they have built a visual outline on the wall. See column 1 for how to develop the visual on the wall.

How other UNLV teachers might adopt this practice

Who can implement?

This works for any area of study, humanities to the sciences, where the instructor wants their students to develop sound, researched, reasoned arguments that can be used to persuade a reader or audience.

Adaptations

Based on type and skill level of your class.

Consider using:

1. the same argument for every group so that you can help students work through each step and talk through the processes at the basic level.
2. different arguments for each group so they follow the instructions, but must concentrate on building their own argument. Then each group can debrief how they put their argument together.
3. incomplete packets delivered to each group. The students will try to piece together an argument, but realize that they have partial arguments. The students must figure out that they need to work together to formulate a complete argument. (This is called the Jigsaw and should be used for more complex arguments).

Source

The entire assignment is available at: <https://www.scribd.com/document/366900059/Are-Dogs-Better-Than-Cats> or contact Sara Mathis at sara.mathis@unlv.edu