



Creating Authentic Student Leadership through Rhetoric

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Introduction

Last year I accepted the challenge of teaching a middle school leadership class without any curriculum or resources. I looked online, perused books, asked colleagues for ideas, and I was able to put together lesson plans for my students to develop their leadership skills and become a presence on campus. My students planned bake sales, dances, and field trips. Since this was the first year we had a leadership class, the students felt empowered about their ability to organize events.

I cannot help but think back to the first day our class met. I asked my students to write in their journals about what the perfect school would look like. After students shared their ideas, we compiled a list of changes we would need to make in order to make our school the "perfect school." My students came up with ideas including healthier school lunches, more sports and after school programs for the middle school, higher GPAs, more student engagement, more projects, less bullying, more novels for the library, and more field trips and dances. While I was able to teach students how to engage in collaborative decision-making, I only skimmed the surface of the rich ideas they brought on the first day of that leadership class. I realized that throughout the year, I had provided them with the tools they needed to communicate effectively with each other, but not with the larger school community. As a result, my students felt confident organizing and planning events such as dances and fundraisers, but tended to shy away from taking on more controversial issues. I heard students voice their concerns about the general apathy felt by their peers and the dismissal they perceived coming from the staff.

I want my students to be problem solvers and to learn to use their voices to create real change. This unit will guide my students through a process of engaging the school community, assessing the needs of our school, analyzing case studies of community activism and rhetoric, studying possible solutions, and ultimately using rhetorical devices to develop their writing and speaking skills to help launch campaigns to implement those solutions. I will use research-based strategies to ensure that my students meet the objectives that I will describe in detail.

Rationale

There are several approaches to empowering young people, so why rhetoric? Rhetoric is often viewed as a manipulative skill. Throughout history, there have been debates about whether rhetoric is beneficial or injurious to society. Students are exposed to some of these manipulative elements of rhetoric on a daily basis through advertisements and popular media. These forms of rhetoric affect choices they make about the food they eat, the clothes they wear, the values they hold, and the products they use. I want my students to understand these manipulative forms of rhetoric in order to become informed citizens and effective leaders.

Rhetoric has also been used in ways that are beneficial to society. Movements for social justice and equality have all been possible because of the use of rhetoric. Rhetoric is the foundation for higher levels of communication; it is imperative that members of a democracy are aware of the use of rhetoric in order to understand and have a voice in the dialogue that has the power to change society. Students should be aware of the debate around rhetoric and understand how to use rhetoric in a positive way.

This unit falls under the umbrella of service learning, which can be defined as pedagogy that integrates academics, civic participation, community service, and reflection. While the skill that students are developing in this unit is rhetoric, the underlying goal is for students to use that skill to become leaders and engage the larger community. *In Beyond Resistance! Youth Activism and Community Change*, editors Shawn Ginwright and Julio Cammarota argue that youth agency and activism are necessary for the expansion of democracy. Our students are the future of democracy, yet they are often passive members of society rather than active agents of change. According to a 2008 survey by U.S. Census Bureau, young people (18-24) have a significantly lower turnout in elections. Engaging students in democratic decision making at the middle school level will give students an entre into the world of civic participation.

Teaching rhetoric in a leadership class will also provide a unique context for students to learn these skills in a very authentic situation. The way in which they use rhetoric will directly impact their school. This is very different from teaching rhetoric in an English class, where students often practice writing using hypothetical writing prompts. English Language Arts standards require students to write persuasive compositions and deliver persuasive speeches in middle school. Since I am also the middle school English teacher at my school, I will be able to strategically provide opportunities for reinforcement in both classes. Andrew Bourelle's essay, "Lessons from Quintilian: Writing and Rhetoric Across the Curriculum for the Modern University," makes the argument that students should be taught to write in all disciplines, not just reading and writing. Although his writing is targeting higher education, his logic based on Quintilian's model of education regarding the need for students to learn how to write specifically to the "form and function" of each discipline can be applied to instruction across different grade levels. Quintilian's claim that language is not the outcome of learning but rather essential to making learning possible is part of both the philosophy and the content found in this unit.

Objectives

I will discuss the objectives for each week along with the background information needed to achieve the objectives and the teaching strategies that will drive the pedagogy. Keeping this information together will lead to a better understanding of the connections between content and pedagogy.

Week 1

1. Students will be able to identify events in which rhetoric has helped communities gain political power.
2. Students will be able to identify the steps to writing a speech according to Cicero.
3. Students will understand the importance of audience and context.
4. Students will define the rhetorical terms *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, finding examples of each in various speeches.

Background

The first step to addressing the problem of students feeling as though they have no voice in the larger school community is to engage in a study of how people have created a voice for themselves. In the first week of this unit, students will study how successful politicians, activists, and community organizers have persuaded both people in power and the community that their causes deserve attention. It will be important to include examples of youth organizers to give students a sense of possibility. Students will learn through readings, videos, speakers, and collaboration with community organizations.

Students should be given an overview of Marcus Tullius Cicero's speechwriting strategies to provide some context as they begin to identify the qualities of effective rhetoric. Cicero was a Roman philosopher and politician who lived from 106 B.C.E. to 43 B.C.E. His writing and political philosophy have tremendously influenced Western thought. Cicero recommended five steps to writing a speech, which are invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery. The first step, invention, includes establishing credibility, deciding upon the effectiveness of possible arguments, and establishing a way to arouse certain feelings in the audience. Arrangement involves the strategic organization of the speech. The following step, style, is comprised of word choice, tone, anecdotes, and figures of speech. Memory, the fourth step, is simply memorizing or becoming familiar with the speech, and finally delivery is practicing the way in which the speech will be given.

Ethos, *pathos*, and *logos* are the three main components of rhetoric as explained by the Greek philosopher Aristotle. *Ethos* is established by gaining the trust of the audience. *Logos* involves a strategic and logical framing of an argument based on the desired reaction from the audience. *Pathos* is the feeling you intend to leave with the audience. The first week will provide students a basic framework, so it isn't necessary to go into detail yet. The main goals during this week are to give students a sense of possibility by studying the success of others who have strived for change and to give students the understanding that persuasion is a skill that can be cultivated.

Possible speeches and case studies to analyze during the first week of the unit might include President Obama's campaign announcement speech, Susan B. Anthony's speech on voting rights, and examples of successful campaigns led by youth leaders. On February 10, 2007, in Springfield, Illinois, Barack Obama announced that he was seeking the Democratic Party's nomination for President. Barack Obama's

announcement speech will demonstrate how he used rhetoric to gain credibility as a politician capable of assuming the role of President. In his speech, he starts establishing his *ethos* by portraying himself as someone who can respond to the general public's desire for change. He talks to people about his role as a community organizer, demonstrating his connection to the community and his dedication to service. Susan B. Anthony's speech shows how she used her knowledge of audience and setting to make a strong case for women's voting rights. Publications featuring youth-led activism can be found at www.whatkidscando.org. There are several videos and articles including youth voices speaking out about healthy eating, after school programs, and service learning. It will also be beneficial to invite guest speakers from local organizations working to create change in the community. I plan on inviting guest speakers from Youth Uprising and the Martin Luther King Jr. Freedom Center, both located in Oakland, California.

Strategies

1. Activate prior knowledge

Students will activate prior knowledge by writing in their journals about their own experiences of hopelessness or possibility about creating change in their schools. In future lessons, they will analyze this information and determine if rhetoric could have helped them become more successful.

2. Note taking and summarizing

Students will take Cornell Notes to record information about Cicero's steps, Aristotle's forms of rhetoric, and the importance of audience and setting.

3. Graphic organizers

Students will be given a graphic organizer. As they study each speech, they will record information about the intended audience, the context, and how the speaker demonstrates the use of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*.

Week 2

1. Students will be able to identify the audience and analyze the audience's priorities and explain how doing so will help establish *ethos*.
2. Students will define democracy.
3. Students will be able to categorize information.
4. Students will be able to create tools to gather information, such as surveys, interview questions, and focus group protocols.
5. Students will communicate effectively through speaking and writing with peers, teachers, parents, and administrators.

Background

Students will need to decide which issues to address first. In order to involve the community and establish credibility, students will gather information on which school-wide issues are of most concern to various members of the community. They will also understand that seeking feedback from the community is a strategic move because they will need the support from the community in order to implement their solutions. Students will also need to persuade community members to take time to participate in focus groups or complete surveys. In addition, they will need to create surveys and write questions for focus groups. While engaging in the process of eliciting feedback, they will need to consider the power of words as they frame

each question.

The focus of this week is to explore the importance of understanding the concerns of the audience. The audience refers to all the key stakeholders including other students, parents, teachers, and administrators. Students should go back to some of the case studies discussed during the first week and explore the role the audience had in shaping the words of the speakers. President Obama's campaign would be a good exemplar of how one establishes credibility by engaging the community. Students are not yet directly persuading their audience, but going into the community to gather information is their first step in establishing *ethos*, or credibility, in the community. In order to establish *ethos*, students need to present themselves as having similar values, having common sense, and looking out for the interest of the school.

It is also important for students to explore the concept of democracy. Students should be presented with a few definitions and discuss the relationship between leaders and their constituents in the context of a democracy. Students should be aware of the importance of civic participation. This might be a good time to present voting statistics, especially among young people. Data about reported voting and registration can be found on the U.S. Census Bureau's website at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/index.html>

Strategies

1. K-W-L chart

Students will use a K-W-L to organize information about their perceptions of school problems and questions they have to gather information about the community's perceptions of problems. A K-W-L chart is a graphic organizer with three columns in which students record what they know, what they want to know, and what they learned about a topic. They will first record the problems they know exist in the school. Next, they will record questions about what they wonder other people in different roles might consider problems. After they complete gathering information, they will record what they learned about perceptions of problems at school.

2. Collaborative learning

Students will work in small groups to create information-gathering tools. They will be given a rubric that will set expectations about how to make their tools appropriate for their given audience(s). Once they design the tool, they will go out into the school community and gather information.

3. Role playing

Students will practice how they will approach community members by role playing in the classroom. Students will write guidelines for how to speak, dress, and approach different audiences.

4. Note taking and summarizing

Students will take notes about democracy. They will use their notes to write a paragraph explaining the concept of democracy to a peer.

5. Class meetings

The first class meeting will begin this week and continue on a weekly basis. There should be a class notebook, which students can access during the week. If there are any issues or concerns that students need to address, they should write about those in the notebook. Class meetings will have a student leader, but the teacher

should model the first meeting. Students will begin by sharing appreciations, discussing issues, and making decisions. There should be a clear decision-making process, which could be voting or consensus decision-making.

Weeks 3-4

1. Students will analyze data.
2. Students will use rhetorical strategies to discuss and prioritize information.
3. Students will analyze cause and effect to develop logical solutions.

Background

Students should be aware that they are still in the invention phase of Cicero's five canons of rhetoric. During the second week, students focused on establishing *ethos*; over the course of the next two weeks, students will focus on *logos*, which is proof through reason. Students will review data and prioritize issues brought up by the community. They will work in small committees to develop solutions for these problems. In order to do so, students will need to address the root causes and consequences of the problems that were brought up, carefully considering the logic behind their analysis.

At this stage, students will go through another series of lessons about persuasive techniques. Which rhetorical devices might be appropriate when presenting certain solutions? What are some persuasive techniques that would appeal to the audience? What changes need to be made when presenting the same solution to a different audience? As students think of the problems they are addressing, they should think of whether the issue is one of judging the past, establishing the tone of the present, or taking action in the future. If students are focusing on the past, the argument can be strengthened by discussing issues of justice. Setting the tone for the present will require students to create a message of unity, emphasizing the moment. In the likely case that students are putting out a call for action, they should focus on the viability of change as well as the benefits for the school.

Strategies

1. Categorizing information

Students will sort the results of their findings and organize the information into categories. The information will be sorted by consolidating similar issues and identifying which members of the school community indicated concern.

2. Cause and effect organizer

Students will use a graphic organizer to help them understand cause and effect patterns. The organizer will help students see patterns and explore why these problems exist and what can be done about them.

3. Cloze reading

I will give my students a speech with omitted words. The omitted words should be strategically selected persuasive words. Students will have to fill in the blanks with words that would be effective.

4. Venn diagram

Students will use a Venn diagram to develop messaging for different audiences. In the center, they will include

the common themes that they will include for all audiences, and each separate circle will have specific content that will be strategically brought up to establish *ethos* and *logos* as they address the unique concerns of each audience.

Weeks 5-6

1. Students will use rhetorical strategies to write letters and speeches.
2. Students will create posters that appeal to *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*.
3. Students will present speeches to members of the school community.

Background

Students will plan how to pitch their solutions and present information to the community in order to gather support and resources. Students will work on arrangement. They will need to consider counterarguments and resistance to their solutions. President Obama's address on health care to Congress is a good model for students to view. It will be important to strategically pause the speech and reflect on the use of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. Another example that students may benefit from is Franklin D. Roosevelt's first inaugural address. In addition to pointing out rhetoric, it will also be important to emphasize grammar and conventions.

Once students have finished writing their speeches, they will rehearse in class in order to become comfortable with public speaking. After receiving feedback on their speeches, students will present their speeches to the community. Action committees will work on gathering support and resources, and they will begin to implement their plans. Students who are not able to gather approval or resources for solutions will have to consider alternatives and propose new solutions or appeal to the community for support using new persuasive tactics.

Students will synthesize the work they have done developing *ethos* and *logos* and focus on also appealing to *pathos*. *Pathos* is the feeling that the speaker wishes to leave with the audience. Students should revisit the Venn diagram and add information to establish *logos*. Students will use the Venn diagrams along with an outline to keep them focused as they work on letters, speeches, and posters.

Strategies

1. Outline

Students will receive an outline to help arrange the ideas they came up with during the invention phase of their work.

2. Peer revising

Students will use rubrics to assess speeches and rubrics. They will offer suggestions on improving word choice and clarity and focus on the style of their speeches.

3. Rehearsal

Before students present their speeches to the community, students will have the opportunity to rehearse in front of their classmates and solicit feedback about how they can be most effective in appealing to *pathos*.

Week 7 and Beyond

1. Students will create an assessment tool to measure progress.
2. Students will analyze how technology can be a persuasive tool and use technology to communicate the effectiveness of solutions and continue to use rhetorical strategies with the school community.
3. Students will reflect upon their problem-solving and rhetorical strategies and set new goals.

Background

As students work on solutions, they will be required to assess the effectiveness of their solutions and give the community updates on the progress that is made. Students will have to consider how to respond when they face obstacles or when solutions don't have successful outcomes. This will be done through a leadership newsletter, a blog or other social media, meetings with key supporters, and announcements. It is important to connect how these time-proven rhetorical strategies can apply to modern forms of communication. It will also be beneficial to remind students of establishing and maintaining *ethos* by checking their writing conventions.

Students will need a model to help them understand how to reflect when they face obstacles and challenges. Jane J. Mansbridge's book, *Why We Lost the E.R.A.*, explains why the Equal Rights Amendment never gathered enough support to become law. The constitutional amendment, which would have given women the same legal rights as men, was passed by Congress in 1972 but did not gather enough support needed to be ratified by the majority. Mansbridge explains that the campaign against the E.R.A. succeeded because the rhetoric shifted to the possibility of changing gender roles rather than focusing on equality. The debate pitted women working outside of the home against full-time homemakers.

Another example that can be referenced is the story of Ruby Bridges, who attended an all-white school in the South, despite constant threats. This story will help students understand that leaders sometimes make decisions even if those decisions are not supported by public opinion. Students can write in their journals about when they feel it is appropriate for leaders to make decisions that are not supported by the majority.

This unit is designed to work as a cycle, so once students assess the problem, they will begin the process again to propose another solution and continue working on the issue brought up. Students may also move on to work on a new problem once they have effectively solved a problem or exhausted all viable possibilities trying to come up with a solution. Students will be required to complete written reflections narrating their experiences as leaders of each campaign.

Strategies

1. Using social media

Most of my students and members of the school community use forms of social media. Students will set up an interactive page that will serve the purpose of communicating with and soliciting feedback from the community.

2. Models

Students will need to see how progress is measured by others. I will show them tools used by departments at our school, as well as assessment tools used by other organizations. Students will use these models to develop a measurement tool.

3. Leadership Journals

Students will reflect on their personal growth as leaders. Students will be asked to share from their leadership journals during our class meetings.

Classroom Activities

In this section, I will provide samples of 1-2 detailed lesson plans for each week. Graphic organizers for some of the lessons may be found in the appendix.

Week 1

Lesson 1

1. Journal: Give students the following prompt and let them write for 5-10 minutes. *Think about something you would like to change about our school. Do you feel hopeful or hopeless about being able to make a difference at school? Why?* As students finish writing, circulate and highlight a few key points in a few students' journals that you want them to share with the class. Ask the preselected students to share information with the class.
2. Case studies: Tell students that they will read and watch videos about young people who have made a difference. Give them a graphic organizer to take notes on who was trying to create change, what they wanted, and what strategies they used to persuade others.
3. Discussion: Based on the case studies we studied, what skills do you think you need in order to be successful in your quest to make a difference at school? Have students refer to their notes so they can make connections.
4. Exit slip: What did you learn about the possibility of creating change today? Students should write a paragraph and submit it by the end of the period.

Lesson 2

1. Activate prior knowledge: Create three unlabeled columns on the board. Ask students to take out their graphic organizers from the previous day's lesson. Tell them to share what strategies were used to persuade others. As students share, record their answers in the three columns, sorting the responses under Ethos, Pathos, and Logos. Keep the categories unlabeled so students can make inferences later.
2. Partner talk: Ask students to complete this sentence starter. *I would title the headings, _____, _____, and _____.* Give students a couple minutes of think time, and then ask them to share and justify their responses with a partner. Give students three minutes to talk to their partners, and then solicit answers from various students to see if there is a pattern.
3. Note-taking: Write *Ethos*, *Pathos*, and *Logos* above each corresponding column, and tell students that these forms of rhetoric have come down from several thousand years (!) ago. If you have access to an LCD projector, project an image of Aristotle. Ask students to set up their Cornell notes page and have them take notes on these forms of rhetoric. The notes do not have to be extremely detailed, but they should give students a basic understanding of the purpose and function of *Ethos*, *Pathos*, and *Logos*.
4. Summarizing: Ask students to write a one-paragraph summary about what they learned about the art of persuasion.

Week 2

Lesson 1

1. Do Now: Students will complete the K section of a KWL chart. Students will record what they know the school community is concerned about with regards to the school.
2. Analyzing voting records: Project data on the LCD projector or give students copies of data on voting records found on the U.S. Census Bureau's website. Ask students to respond to the following questions on a sheet of paper:
 - a. Which age group had the highest voter turnout?
 - b. Which age group had the lowest voter turnout?
 - c. If policy is created knowing this information, whose opinions do you think might matter more? Why?
3. Break the word democracy into its word parts to give students a simple definition (demos = the people; -cracy = rule of). Ask students why civic participation is important to a democracy.
4. Group brainstorm: Who are the various groups that make up "the people" at our school? Have students share, compiling the list on the board. Make sure that students have included all stakeholders in the school community, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, support staff, custodial staff, administrators, board members, etc.
5. Assign students to outreach committees. Each committee will be responsible for communicating with one group that was identified in the step above.
6. KWL Chart: Revisit the KWL chart, adding to the W section. In this section, students should record what they wonder about the concerns of their assigned group.

Lesson 2

1. Do Now: Ask students to brainstorm different ways to gather information from members of the school community.
2. Give students a handout explaining information-gathering tools, such as interviews, surveys, and focus groups. Ask students to sit with their outreach committees and select which tool(s) would work best with their group.
3. Give students time to develop these tools in their small outreach groups. Once students have completed creating their tools, they should be collected. Students will need teacher feedback before they are ready to go out into the school community and begin the information gathering process.

Weeks 3-4

Lesson 1

1. Journals: Why should leaders listen to the concerns of the people they are leading?
2. Organizing data: Ask students to take out the results of their surveys, questionnaires, focus groups, etc. Give each group a pack of sticky notes. Tell them to write one concern per note, as well as the name of their outreach committee. Ask students to look through their notes and see if they can generate some broad categories such as academics, extracurricular activities, and school culture. Write these categories on the board, and have students come up and put each sticky note under the category they think it best fits. Students may need to create new categories as they go through the process.
3. After looking at the data, students will vote on which concern(s) to address first. Students should be given time to discuss solutions before voting. There are different ways that students can make

decisions. The teacher or class can decide whether the class will make decisions based on majority or a consensus based decision-making process.

Lesson 2

Students should spend at least a couple days analyzing the causes and effects of the selected concern(s). Students should be given a graphic organizer to help them think about why the problem exists, and use their understanding of the root causes to propose a solution. The teacher will need to ask strategic questions to push students' thinking. This lesson takes place after that has been done, and a solution has been proposed.

1. Journal: *You have a project due in your English class. You think the deadline should be extended, and you need to convince your classmates and your teacher. What would you say to persuade your classmates? What would you say to persuade your teacher? Why wouldn't you use the same approach with both? Give students 5-7 minutes to write, and then have a discussion about why it's important to understand your audience in order to persuade them.*
2. Give students a chart with the names of all the community members at the top. Students should complete the chart with a partner, writing what kind of messaging would be appropriate while communicating the solution with each type of audience.

Weeks 5-6

Lesson 1

1. Watch President Obama's campaign speech: Students should watch the speech and take notes about how he establishes *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. Allow students to share their observations after viewing the speech.
2. Students should brainstorm ideas for their own speeches. The audience the speeches will depend on each student's outreach committee.
3. Provide students with an outline based on Cicero's steps. Allow students to complete the outline in class.

For homework, students should write the speech. The following day, students should work with a peer to revise their speeches. Students should be given a rubric focusing on persuasive techniques to evaluate their work. Students should rehearse their speeches over the next few days.

Lesson 2

If you have access to an auditorium, it will be helpful to reserve that space so that students can practice speaking formally. If not, the classroom will suffice.

1. Give students feedback forms for each student speaking. The form should include speaking clearly, posture, eye contact, speed, and tone. As each student delivers his or her speech, the other students should write feedback on the form.
2. Once the forms are returned to students, they should practice improving their speeches in small groups.

Week 7 and Beyond

Lesson 1

1. Journal: What forms of communication do you use most often? Do you use different forms of communication based on your audience?
2. List the names of the different outreach committees on the board, and ask students what they feel would be the most effective way to communicate progress with each group. Ask them if there are any methods of communication that might work for multiple groups.
3. Allow students to discuss and vote on a few forms of communication (newsletter, social media, blogs, board meetings, morning announcements, etc.) Then assign students to working groups to make sure these forms of communication take place on an ongoing basis. Students should set deadlines that are submitted to the teacher so that there is accountability for each group.

Lesson 2

1. Journal: How will you know if you are successful with your campaign? How can you measure success before you reach your final goal?
2. Evaluation is the final piece of the unit. Give students examples of evaluation. Teachers can use examples from their own classrooms, such as having an objective and using an assessment to see if they were successful in helping students meet the objective. The following website has some useful information that can help students design evaluation tools.

http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/fnl_eval.htm#anchor1585345

1. After reviewing different forms of evaluation, assign appropriate forms of
2. valuation to each outreach team.

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