

A Letter of Concern About a Local Issue Level 1, Sample 1

A

May 28th 2001

Mayor of [REDACTED]

Dear Mayor,

I am writing regarding the issue of the skatepark in [REDACTED]. I believe that the youth of [REDACTED] need a designated location where they can skateboard. I support the town council's suggestion to build a skateboard park.

Building a skateboard park in [REDACTED] would give teenagers a place where they could freely skateboard and rollerblade. Many locations in [REDACTED] are designated as skateboard-free zones. Having a skateboard park would also decrease the risks to non-participating citizens and passers-by. People are opposed to building a skateboard park because it might become a location for drug use and drug dealing. This could be easily remedied by having periodical supervision of the area by the police.

Building a skateboard park in [REDACTED] would be an ideal solution to the situation. This is an optimum solution because it would occupy most teenagers and keep them out of trouble. I politely request that a skateboard park be built in the town of [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

A concerned citizen

B

Bibliography

1. Hogben, Murray. "Teens Cheer vote on skateboard park".
The Kingston Whig-Standard. 5 May 2001.
2. Interview: Ms. X at [REDACTED] City Hall. 17th May 2001.
3. Interview: Mr. F. at [REDACTED] City Hall. 18th May 2001.

Teacher's Notes

Knowledge/Understanding

- The student demonstrates limited understanding of the civic issue (e.g., refers to the local council's proposal to build a skateboard park but does not explain why the issue is of concern to the community).

Thinking/Inquiry

- The student demonstrates limited ability to analyse critically two different perspectives, as illustrated by the following:
 - The student provides limited analysis of the position advocated in the letter (e.g., notes that "Having a skateboard park would also decrease the risks to non-participating citizens and passers-by", but provides no specifics on such risks).
 - The student includes only a very general reference to an opposing perspective (e.g., "People are opposed ... because it might become a location for drug use") and offers a simplistic response to this position (e.g., "This could be easily remedied by having periodical supervision of the area by the police.").
- The student uses inquiry skills with limited effectiveness, as illustrated by the following:
 - The issue is not clearly separated from the solution (e.g., "I am writing regarding the issue of the skatepark in ..."; "Building a skateboard park in ... would be an ideal solution to the situation.").
 - The student does not address when, where, or how the park would be built.

Communication

- The student uses language and tone with limited effectiveness: Although sentences are clearly written, the tone is respectful, and attempts have been made to include persuasive vocabulary (e.g., "I believe that the youth of ... need a designated location ..."; "an ideal solution"), ideas are not logically ordered and the connections between them have not been made explicit (e.g., in the first three sentences of the second paragraph).

Application

- The student makes connections with limited effectiveness, as illustrated by the following:
 - Because the student has neither discussed the obstacles to be overcome nor outlined the steps involved in implementation, the solution cannot be judged realistic or reasonable.
 - The student suggests how some youths would be affected by the solution (e.g., "it would occupy most teenagers and keep them out of trouble"), but does not adequately consider how the solution would affect the broader community.

Comments/Next Steps

- The student needs to provide additional supporting details throughout the letter.
- The student should conduct additional research on the issue so that statistical information can be included to bolster the argument.
- The sample shows promise, particularly in the writing style, which is clear and persuasive and approaches level 2.
- The student's focus is too narrow. The student could look at other sides of the issue to make the overall argument more compelling.
- The flow of the letter would be improved by the use of transitional words and phrases.

A Letter of Concern About a Local Issue Level 1, Sample 2

A

May, 29, 2001

Mayor

Dear Mayor,

I am writing this letter to inform you of my concern about [REDACTED] Expressway. Destroying this natural and beautiful valley is a concern to me because it holds the last of fourteen streams that flows through [REDACTED]. It also holds rare species and is a wonderful place for kids and family to spend a day in.

I am aware of the government wanting to put an expressway through the middle of the valley, and I am aware of the problems it will cause and fix. To situations like this there are different viewpoints, or pros and cons. I am assured that it would cut down on our travelling time, but to have it at the expense of cutting down our valley is wrong. My viewpoint on this situation is that having to cut down 40,000 trees, and leaving most of the animals homeless, is cruel. There is also a law against killing endangered animals, and if this valley was to be cut down it will kill rare species.

In conclusion I would like to say that the valley should NOT be removed, because it is the last natural stream flowing through [REDACTED]. It also is a home to many animals. The solution that is best is to put the highway a different route. Action being done on this issue would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for taking your time to read my letter.

Sincerely,
A concerned Citizen

B

Bibliography

March 21, 2001

"Doomed to repeat history: Mistakes that decimated our core are about to be repeated with [REDACTED] Expressway" by Herman Turkstra
[http://\[REDACTED\].com/](http://[REDACTED].com/)

April 10, 2001

"Keeping [REDACTED] livable: The city's revival depends on our protecting a prized natural asset like [REDACTED]"
[http://\[REDACTED\].com/](http://[REDACTED].com/)

Teacher's Notes

Knowledge/Understanding

- The student demonstrates limited understanding of the civic issue, stating the reasons why the valley is valued by the community (e.g., “it holds the last of fourteen streams that flows through It also holds rare species and is a wonderful place ...”), but not providing enough detail to support these assertions.

Thinking/Inquiry

- The student demonstrates limited ability to conduct critical analysis, making only a brief reference to an opposing perspective (e.g., “I am assured that it would cut down on our travelling time, but to have it at the expense of cutting down our valley is wrong.”).
- The student uses inquiry skills with limited effectiveness, as illustrated by the following:
 - The arguments lack supporting facts and details (e.g., the student asserts that “if this valley was to be cut down it will kill rare species”, but provides no facts to support the assumption that endangered species live in the valley).
 - The student identifies only a very broad solution (e.g., “The solution that is best is to put the highway a different route.”), and does not offer any detail to clarify this suggestion.

Communication

- The student uses language and tone with limited effectiveness, as illustrated by the following:
 - The use of persuasive vocabulary is limited to a basic statement of concern (e.g., “I am writing this letter to inform you of my concern about ... Expressway.”) and to a general statement of awareness (e.g., “I am aware of the problems it will cause and fix.”).
 - The student concludes on an apologetic note, using the passive voice, which limits persuasiveness (e.g., “Action being done on this issue would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for taking your time to read my letter.”).
 - The writing is not always clear, and the syntax is frequently awkward (e.g., “To situations like this there are different viewpoints”; “My viewpoint on this situation is that having to cut down 40,000 trees ... is cruel.”).

Application

- The student makes connections with limited effectiveness, proposing a solution that is not very realistic or reasonable (e.g., suggests that the answer to the problem is “to put the highway a different route”) and failing to acknowledge the possible destructive effects of the solution on other segments of the community.

Comments/Next Steps

- The letter presents little evidence that the student has conducted effective research. Specific facts need to be included to support claims and generalizations.
- The student needs to work on improving his or her writing skills, specifically with respect to sentence structure and verb tenses (e.g., “It also holds rare species and is a wonderful place for kids and family to spend a day in.”; “if this valley was to be cut down it will kill rare species”).