

## Tips for Writing for Parents

By Cathy Fleischer

1. *Tell a story:* Try to capture your main point through a vivid anecdote—one that parents can relate to. Tell the story of a child, a classroom, a teacher, an incident. The more details (the more thick description) that can animate the scene, the better.
2. *Identify possible shared values:* Think about how the story you're telling connects to more than just a single child--but represents a larger set of values that the parent might share. Why should this story matter to the parents who might have had similar experiences with their own child? Why should this story matter to parents everywhere?
3. *Situate the story* in a larger issue: Why is that story important? What does it illustrate about the point you're trying to make? (i.e., what does the story demonstrate about standardized testing or expanded notions of writing or grammar instruction)
4. *Use expertise, but carefully:* While the story alone can make a significant point, it's still useful to have some outside expertise to back it up. But you don't want to sound too academic. A link to a source (such as an article in *English Journal* or a study reported on NPR), a retelling of an idea from a source, a mention that "years of research tells us..." validate the point you are making.
5. *Don't talk down* to parents: Parents bring a wide variety of experiences to their reading and so it's important to write in a conversational voice that speaks to and includes their experiences. So, while you don't want your post to be filled with academic jargon, you also don't want to seem patronizing.
6. *Use your conversational voice:* Use "I" and "you" and language that demonstrates that you are a part of the conversation and exploration and not *the* expert on it. If you are a parent, draw on that connection to relate to other parents.
7. *A picture is worth.....:* well, if not 1000 words, maybe it's worth 100 of this 750 word blog post! Strategic pictures of real kids in real settings can bring home your point. And a short video that really shows a way of teaching and learning in action is priceless. (But remember that you do need permissions for these photos. For more information, see <https://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/>.)