**Grab-and-Go Writing Activity:**

**Alternative Spring Break: Persuading Stakeholders**

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**Timeframe**: 20 minutes

**Materials needed (including preparation)**

1. Handout with the whole project explained. [“Handout 1: Proposals and Public Writing Exercise: Alternative Spring Break”] This will have been handed out earlier that period or during the previous class period.
2. List of sample projects that other schools have done. [“Handout 2: For Inspiration: Alternative Spring Breaks from Around the World”]
3. (Recommended) Assign as homework an essay or news article about alternative spring breaks. I use “Why Alternative Spring Breaks are a Great Idea,” by Katie Dwyer.
4. (Strongly Recommended) A laptop to project the Web so you can show YouTube videos and Web pages made to promote alternative spring break projects from other schools.

**Objectives**: After the activity, students will be able to

* Propose an idea to multiple audiences based on different motivations of different stakeholders.
* Choose appropriate modes and genres to promote an idea to different audiences.

**Introduction: [2-3 minutes]**

[Note: The basic idea of the Alternative Spring Break will have been introduced already in multimodal format—with a YouTube video or two and a visit to college websites. The class will have already brainstormed ideas for projects they want to do and voted to select one of them.]

The step you introduce here will be for the strategizing and writing to different stakeholders.

Here’s what you say: The most important principle to remember is that different people and different stakeholders will be moved by different appeals, based on their values, their profession, and their stake in the project.

Parents, for instance, want what’s best for their students’ education but might be fearful about safety. The manager/principal of the orphanage and school in Guatemala where your students will be volunteering wants to be sure her kids will really benefit from this project. The office supply/art store that is donating materials to the Guatemalan school wants to have a nice photogenic charity project to post on its Website to improve its image in its community. Students you might recruit want to have a great time, get some professional experience to put on their resume, and test their teaching skills--while also feeling that they are making the world a better place.

**Procedures**: [15 minutes]

**Step 1 [2 minutes]:** Direct the students’ attention to the place on their handout 1 that identifies the stakeholders who will be part of in any project of this kind:

* One or more faculty members to sponsor the project,
* students to participate,
* parents of students who want to go,
* a community sponsor (to donate materials, expertise, or funding),
* a relevant member of the community you plan to help with the project.

Put the students in groups (or use the group they are already in, if this is continuing) and assign each group to ONE stakeholder from this list.

**Step 2 [10 minutes]:** Tell each group to do some strategizing to achieve these tasks:

1. Brainstorm a bulleted list of the project’s benefits that they will emphasize to their particular target audience.
2. Choose an appropriate genre for this audience (letter, email, poster, YouTube video, etc)
3. Decide what visuals (if any) to use.

**Step 3 [3 minutes]:** Working collectively or individually, Write an opening line to whatever kind of piece this would be, a good hook for this particular stake-holder.

**Closure/Evaluation: [2 minutes]** Ask a few groups to briefly summarize their 3-point plan and then read their opening lines. Evaluate them as a group by asking, “Would that work? What do you think?” After this, you can collect what they’ve written to evaluate them more fully, or send them home with the assignment to write a full pitch, either for the same one they discussed in their group or an individual project. I’ve used this assignment as a way to prepare them for their research projects, which were supposed to be proposals to solve a problem.

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**Activity Analysis**:

**Strengths**: A key skill—maybe the key skill students need to learn from a rhetoric & composition class is to tailor their message for different audiences. This exercise is designed to do that in a “real-world” context using multiple genres and modes. Also, getting students to do anything productive in spring break season is a challenge, but this exercise offers them a useful focus for what they are already thinking about. It is also very flexible and adaptable: because any discipline can create an alternative spring break project, any class can use this exercise to get their students to see the real-world applicability of the professional knowledge base and skills they are acquiring in college. Finally, proposal writing is part of any discipline, so an exercise that gets students to think about how to persuade different stake-holders to support a proposal is universally applicable. **Weaknesses**: It requires students to use complex analytical skills in combinations that might still be unfamiliar to them, so it can be difficult to predict how much support and time they might need.