Writing Across the Curriculum: Science/ Health

Coming up with a meaningful essay which is required of all Middle School content area classes twice a year is a challenge. This is one in which I never have difficulty getting the students to do their best work. It follows our study of the cardiovascular system. Having a film related to health consequences of poor health habits/discussion of hereditary risk factors vs. controllable risk factors is helpful but optional. I was partial to I am Joe’s Heart, which our District Media Center has seen fit to discontinue. Student assignment is to write a persuasive essay in the form of a letter to a loved one targeting at least three health risk behaviors we have learned that contribute to cardiovascular disease. They may use the 3-5 format, or any format they choose. Their letter must explain why the behaviors are dangerous and on a more personal level why it is important to the student that the person consider changing their ways. The final part of the assignment is to give a copy which I provide to the person. I have had students write to parents, grandparents, family friends, even coaches often with tear-jerking persuasion. Students have reported that I was right when I told them that the recipients would take them seriously and think hard about what they had to say.

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