Workplace Skill: Writing a Letter of Inquiry

Next, show a letter of inquiry that needs editing. (1) Discuss the ways the letter “wanders.” (2) Ask students to find the topic sentence (sentence #3), reword it, and place it at the beginning. (3) Have students identify the sentences that don’t relate to the main idea (sentences #2 and #6). (4) Ask students to compose one or two other sentences that do relate to the main idea. (5) Write students’ edited versions on the chalkboard.

12 Cook Street
Pietop, Montana (ZIP)
April 1, 1998

Yum Foods Corporation
River Forest Road
Smithers, Minnesota (ZIP)

Dear Yum Foods:

I think there are a couple of steps missing. Almost everyone likes a few snacks after school. On your package of Flitter Bits, the directions aren’t clear. What do you do after crunching up the jelly beans? Does “cook” mean boil or roast? Flitter Bits might make a good party food.

Sincerely,
Eduardo Esposito

Invite students to write expository paragraphs for letters of inquiry. Examples:
- Ask a local SPCA about summer or weekend jobs at the animal shelter.
- Ask a favorite author if she or he would visit your classroom and tell why you would appreciate such a visit.
- Tell a manufacturer of weed-killers about specific concerns and questions you have about their product.
- Ask a local or national political figure for his or her position on an issue that matters to you.
- Tell a TV executive about the kinds of programs you like and ask why there are not more of these programs.
- Write a Web inquiry asking for information on a specific assignment you have in school.