

**Date:** September 14, 2019

**To:** Dr. Abigail Bakke, Instructor, ENG4/572: Writing About Health & Medicine

**From:** Sara Gulbranson

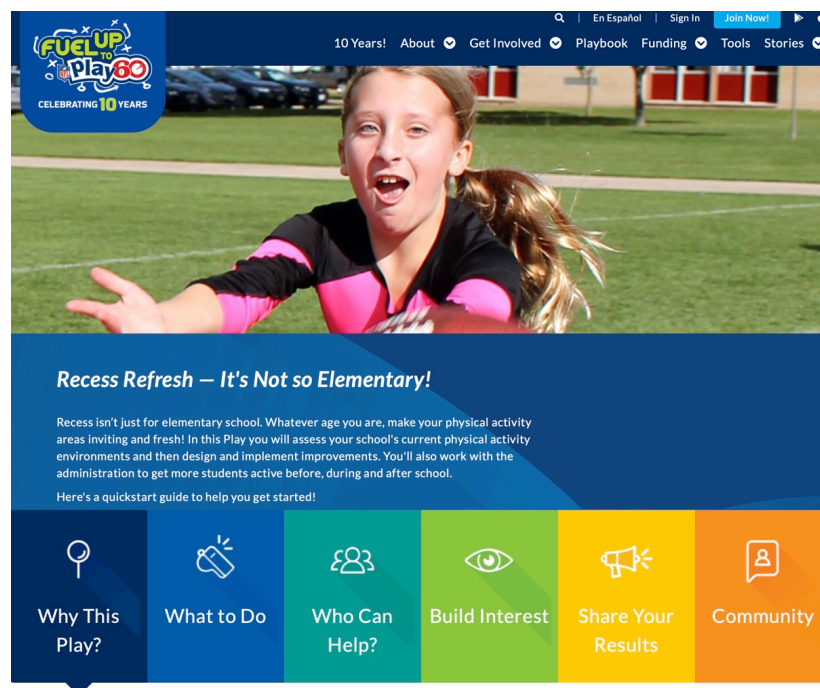
**Re:** Rhetorical Analysis of Fuel Up to Play 60's playbook, "Recess Refresh—It's Not so Elementary!"

## Introduction

When creating printed copy, instructional writers take into account the audience, context and purpose. However, writing effective, instructional *web* copy follows a slightly nuanced approach. This memo presents a rhetorical analysis of Fuel Up to Play 60's online, instructional "playbook" entitled, "Recess Refresh – It's Not so Elementary!" (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019a).

## Background

Fuel Up to Play 60 is the most sizable "in-school health and wellness program" in the United States (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019b). Fuel Up to Play 60 offers a variety of actionable "playbooks," or online instructional resources, for teachers implementing parts of the program in their schools. The "Recess Refresh—It's Not so Elementary!" playbook guides teachers through making improvements to their schools' recess times. The online playbook offers an overview and a selection of clickable subsections detailing the playbook's rationale, instructions and support resources.



*Figure 1.* The playbook provides an overview and then options to learn more (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019c, n.p.).

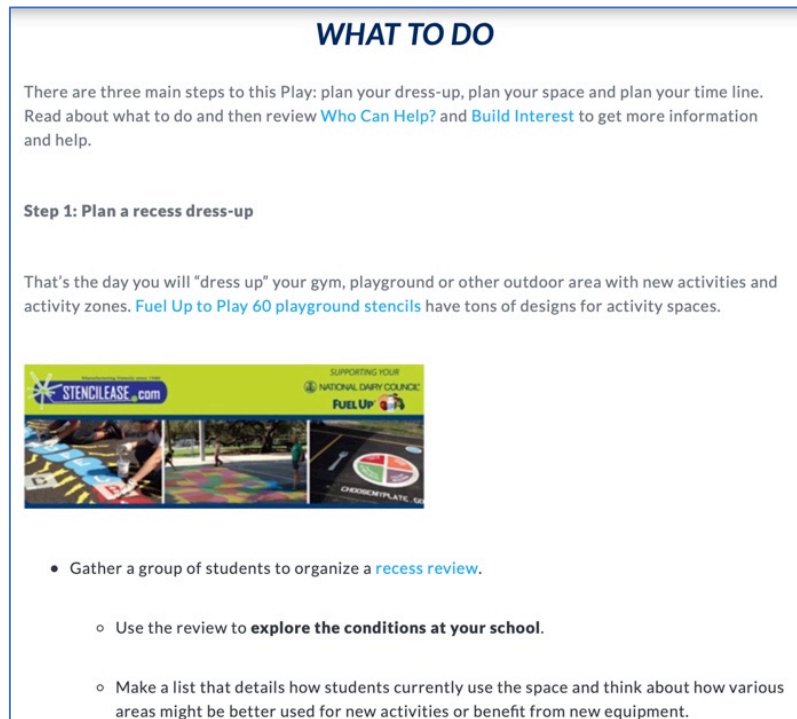
## Rhetorical Analysis

A rhetorical analysis examines how an author communicates his or her purpose to his or her specific audience within a given rhetorical situation. The rhetorical situation inputs of audience, purpose and context determine the outputs of genre, content and strategy (Bonk, 2015, p.18).

The National Dairy Council and National Football League collaborated with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to create the “Fuel Up to Play 60” program (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019). The playbook’s specific author is unknown, but is presumably writing on behalf of these organizations. The National Dairy Council likely has a vested financial interest in school health since most schools offer milk for student lunches. The National Football League’s popularity attracts student engagement with the health and wellness program. The USDA lends credibility to the program as a presumably neutral third party and government entity.

The playbook is written primarily to teachers (practitioners) who will implement healthy changes in their schools’ recess programs (Bonk, 2015, p. 28). The playbook offers several clues to its intended audience. The playbook refers to “students” in the third person (National Dairy Council, 2019c). The authors ask the audience to “[consider] asking your principal” (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019d, n.p.). Furthermore, the authors instruct the audience to “[work] with your principal, parent-teacher organization and others on your team” (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019d., n.p.). In the “Who Can Help” section, the audience can reach out to principals, teachers, students, families and facilities management personnel (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019e). The intimate nature between teachers and students, and not between administration and students, is important to empowering student program leadership and incorporating a hands-on approach to program implementation. Teachers are the practitioners and operators of the program (Bonk, 2015, p. 29). The content’s affinity for listing steps and direct application support that the audience is the teachers (2015, p. 31).

The audience is furthermore an online audience. When reading printed material, the audience tends to follow a “Z” pattern, starting at the top left and moving down the page. This linear pattern follows the flow of information as the author intended. (Mizrahi 2013, p. 18) In contrast, web readers “skim”, “scroll”, and do not follow the author’s writing from the beginning to the end (Mizrahi, 2013, p.19). Web readers quickly look through website content until they find something of interest (Mizrahi, 2013, p. 19). Web readers follow an “F” pattern: “two horizontal swipes followed by a vertical swipe” (Mizrahi, 2013, p.19). Web readers spend about 80% of their time reading what is included on the first landing page and only 20% of their time on the rest of the information. Website content must be organized visually and provide easy, intuitive access to information. (Mizrahi, 2013, p. 19) The large font titles with following brief, overview text; bold titles and bulleted lists exhibit an awareness of the “F” pattern and skimming readership in the playbook.




*Figure 2.* The playbook exhibits awareness of the “F” pattern and skimming readership through bold titles, left-justified text, and bulleted lists (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019d, n.p.).

I believe the purpose of the playbook is to instruct. The playbook guides teachers in maximizing school recess time to improve student health and wellness (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019c). The playbook provides action steps to assess and improve his or her school’s recess program (2019d), engage student program leadership, involve supporters (2019f) and celebrate success (2019g). Topics include, “What to Do,” (2019d, n.p.) wording includes “guide to help you get started” (2019c, n.p.), and sections include chronological steps (2019d). The term “playbook” is used to describe the entire document (2019c, n.p.). Links to assessment tools, such as the “Recess Review”, help teachers engage student leadership through action steps (201d, n.p.).

**Step 3:** Work with your principal, parent-teacher organization and others on your team to make a time line for getting your changes implemented. Consider applying for [Fuel Up to Play 60 Funds](#) to make your plan a reality.

- Ask volunteers to come to school on the weekend(s) to help with clean-up, planting trees or grass, installing equipment, and painting scenes and activity spaces on the paved areas.
- Encourage all students to participate. These areas are everyone's to take care of and enjoy.
- Create a proposed schedule for implementing your ideas. Again, you may be able to put together a team of volunteers to get the work done in one weekend or you may want to plan for multiple projects over time, depending on your designs and your budget.

Figure 3. The playbook's chronological organization ("Step 3") and imperative voice demonstrate its instructional purpose (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019d, n.p.).



## Recess Review

Physical Activity Space Assessment

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ School Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Program Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Recess Review Team Members: \_\_\_\_\_

**DIRECTIONS:** Take a look around at recess time. What are students doing? Are they playing? Use this tool to identify areas of your playground that are working well, and areas that could benefit from some attention. Make notes in each category to share with your Program Advisor and other school adults to make a plan for improvement.

Use the results to target your school's efforts using the Ramp Up for Recess Play.

Spaces: Are the spaces clean and safe? Is there enough room for kids to run, play team games or explore?		
Area	Need Improvement?	Notes
Paved area or blacktop	Y / N	
Open grassy area	Y / N	
Sports field/track	Y / N	

Figure 4. Recess Review (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019i, p. 1).

I believe teachers will use the document primarily in a school context. Teachers will reference the playbook while preparing for and implementing the program. The playbook includes instructions and links to resources necessary to enact the program, such as a playground

checklist and playground stencils encouraging physical activity (2019d). The playbook is short, includes plenty of white space and bullets, and uses shorter words to increase reading facility. Many of the words are short in character length with few longer than 10 characters and most are familiar to students at a middle school reading level.

Teachers will share the program information with decision-makers, funding sources, and community influencers to garner program support. The playbook might be shared digitally or in print form in community meetings, parent-teacher association meetings, school board meetings, or in one-on-one meetings between the activist and key decision-makers. Parents may also share the playbook with other parents or use the playbook to explain the program to their students. The person introducing the playbook provides the framework for the audience's adoption or rejection of the playbook's ideas.

## Rhetorical Strategies

The authors use genre, content and strategy to address the rhetorical situation (Bonk, 2015, p.18). This unique online genre presents opportunities to organize the information and adapt to a different style of reading. The content faces some character and sentence length limitations, yet achieves addressing underlying audience concerns. The organizational strategy is complex with nested subcategories each with its own strategy.

The playbook is an example of educational (Bonk, 2015, p. 19) website genre. The information is found online and provides instruction for implementing the health and wellness initiatives. Website genre possesses unique attributes compared to other genres. "The biggest difference [from traditional print] is that **web writing is interactive**" (Mizrahi, 2013, p. 17). Web authors use links connecting to other information and employ "chunking" techniques to keep paragraphs short and easy to digest (Mizrahi, 2013, p. 17). Websites include additional visual elements, like video and audio (Mizrahi 2013, p. 17). Effective website design is imperative for readability and must also account for different reading platforms (Mizrahi, 2013, p. 18).

The content provides a resource for implementing strategies to improve student health and wellness during recess at school. However, teachers might be concerned about whether students will engage with the program and how to involve volunteers and other staff. The playbook suggests students take a leadership role in the program through assessing the recess environment and making improvements. The playbook provides a link to the PDF assessment form for easy printouts for students. (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019d) The playbook also provides research articles supporting the need for the program (2019c) and resources for school staff and volunteer involvement. A chart lists out types of staff and volunteers linked to specific duties. (2019e) For example, "Facilities Management Personnel" can assist "with planning of outdoor grounds improvements" (2019e, n.p.). The authors address the underlying concerns and interests of the readers.

Writing web content has several unique characteristics. Mizrahi (2013) offers several tips on writing website content. Content must fit easily on a variety of platforms and be "pruned to the bone, up-to-date, and relevant" (Mizrahi, 2013, p. 20). Creating a website involves the author's

collaboration with other team members (web developers, designers and project managers) who will ultimately influence the end product (2013, p. 20). Every person's input must be melded together into a cohesive, consistent style and message. Writers often use a conversational tone in website writing and using the word "you" is acceptable (2013, p. 29).

Mizrahi suggests the following guidelines for writing web content (2013):

- Choose words that are simple and define terms for less knowledgeable, but intended audiences. (p. 21)
- Chunk content into groups of no more than 100 words. (p. 21)
- Web writing should be half the length of written copy (p. 21).
- Limit sentence length from 10 words to no more than 20 words. (p. 21)
- After including a topic sentence, write concise paragraphs with no more than 6-8 lines, or convert them to bullet lists. (p. 22, 23)
- Do not write more content per page than can fit on one screen. (p. 22)
- Appeal to the web reader's scanning instinct through bullets and keeping line lengths to no more than 70 characters. (p. 23)

Notice how the "Build Interest" subsection follows many of Mizrahi's suggestions. The content fits neatly all together on one screen and content groups, line lengths, and character lengths are kept concise. All sentences are 23 words or less. The first sentence is approximately 90 characters and the length of the first line will vary by device. The authors chunked content and kept paragraphs to less than 4 lines and still included bullets. (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019f)

### **BUILD INTEREST**

- Work with others to take photos of your current playground and physical activity areas (e.g., gym, track, fields, courts, etc.).
  - Use the Internet to search for examples of what your team would consider a "better" looking space.
  - Use your photos to create a presentation for the principal and parent-teacher organization showing what *is* versus what *could be* at your school.

Survey students across all grade levels to find out what their most and least favorite things are about recess or physical activity times. Include this information in your presentation to the principal and in your planning for action.

[Share Your Results](#)

Figure 5. Web copy must be both simple and concise (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019f, n.p.)



Titles and headlines have multiple purposes in web content. Web writers assign titles to web pages and headlines as article titles. Headings and subheadings organize further detailed information. (Mizrahi, 2013, p.25, 26) Effective title word choice will facilitate search engine optimization so the online content is discovered by the intended audience (2013, p. 26). Anchor headings can link to content sections further down in the reading (2013, p. 21).

The author uses a complex organizational strategy that includes a variety of nested strategies (Bonk 2015, p. 56). The playbook is held together by an overall specificity strategy (2015, p.45). The introductory text is followed a selectable collection of topics, including: “Why This Play?”, “What to Do”, “Who Can Help?”, “Build Interest”, “Share Your Results”, and “Community” (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019c, n.p.). The organization and order of these topics could arguably exhibit other strategies. The reason and action steps sections of the program are perhaps more important than sharing results and points to an order-of-importance strategy (Bonk, 2015, p. 45). Additionally, the topics may lead to a problem-method-solution strategy, which is interestingly often used for “[public-service] campaigns”, according to Bonk (2015, p. 52). The reason for the program presents a problem, the action steps propose a method, and the program support topics address the solution of resources to implement the program (2015, p. 52).

Nested strategies (Bonk, 2015, p. 56) were found in each subsection. “Why This Play” included specificity (2015, p. 45) with mild signposting (2015, p. 57). An introductory paragraph summarizes findings of the articles included by hyperlinks below the paragraph. (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019c) The “What to Do” includes chronological strategy (Bonk, 2015, p. 44) with mild signposting (2015, p. 57). This section walks through “Step 1”, “Step 2”, and Step 3”, and includes many hyperlinks for further information (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019d). “Who Can Help?” includes importance strategy (Bonk, 2015, p. 45). Possible help resources are chartered in order of most influential, from the principal all the way down to “Facilities Management Personnel” (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019e). “Build Interest” includes chronological strategy (Bonk, 2015, p. 44) and guides the reader through gathering information to present to the principal (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019f). “Share Your Results” is organized spatially (Bonk, 2015, p. 42). Promotional suggestions move from inside the school, to the school website, to the school’s social media, to a grand opening for the parents and community. (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019g) “Community” is also organized spatially (Bonk, 2015, p. 42). The focus reaches out from older students to all students to the local community. (2019 National Dairy Council, 2019h)

## Conclusion

The playbook’s writing and design reflect the rhetorical situation. The rhetorical analysis concludes that the 2019 National Dairy Council and National Football League collaborated with the United States Department of Agriculture to create an in-school health and wellness program which included actionable playbooks addressed to teachers accessing the internet in a school context. The authors employ content and organizational strategies aimed at the unique needs and concerns of teachers. The authors use a complex mix of organizational strategies and nested strategies. The playbook offers a nuanced approach to fully understanding audience,

context and purpose. The same audience interacts differently with the same content based on whether the content is printed or online. The playbook authors effectively accounted for the online audience's reading patterns, shortened attention span, and need for easily digested nuggets of content. These elements further support the instructional playbook's accessibility for quick reference, implementation, and share-ability.



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