



All About Writing Standard #1: Standard Progression and Research Base

6th – 12th Argument Writing

(Underlined portions indicate what is new to the grade level)

| Grades 6-8 | Grades 9-10 | Grades 11-12 |
|---|---|---|
| <p>Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce claim(s) about a topic or issue, acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant, accurate data and evidence that demonstrate an understanding of the topic or text, using credible sources. Use words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons and evidence. Establish and maintain a formal style. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented. | <p>Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce <u>precise</u> claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and <u>create an organization that establishes clear relationships among the claim(s), counterclaims, reasons and evidence.</u> <u>Develop</u> claim(s) <u>and counterclaims fairly, supplying data and evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both claim(s) and counterclaims in a discipline – appropriate form and in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level and concerns.</u> Use words, phrases, and clauses <u>to link the major sections of the text</u>, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships <u>between</u> claim(s), and counterclaims. Establish and maintain a formal style <u>and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.</u> Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from <u>or</u> supports the argument presented. | <p>Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce precise, <u>knowledgeable</u> claim(s), <u>establish the significance of the claim(s)</u>, distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that <u>logically sequences</u> the claim(s), counterclaims, reasons and evidence. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly, <u>and thoroughly</u>, supplying the <u>most relevant</u> data and evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both claim(s) and counterclaims in a discipline –appropriate form that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, <u>values, and possible biases.</u> Use words, phrases, and clauses <u>as well as varied syntax</u> to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships <u>between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and</u> between claim(s) and counterclaims. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from or supports the argument presented. |

About Standard #1

Argument writing emphasizes an ability to compare and synthesize ideas across authentic, real-world texts that may explore historical and larger concepts in politics, history and/or scientific phenomenon. The ability to craft successful written arguments hinges on student’s ability to make precise claims and provide clear reasoning and relevant textual evidence to substantiate their claims. The New Illinois Learning Standards also emphasize the ability to conduct research in which students gather, evaluate, and use evidence to support their central claims and arguments.

For history teachers, instruction focused on building arguments may include routinely conducting activities in which students answer text-dependent questions from primary sources, some of which may include graphs, tables, literature, and narratives. Effective instruction may also focus on standards-based skills and knowledge, such as author’s purpose or point of view, use of reasoning, and structure of text. Students must also be able to incorporate narrative accounts into their analyses of text. In Science, students make claims by arriving at conclusions that answer questions or address problems common to a text or texts. Using data in a scientifically acceptable form, students marshal evidence and draw upon their understanding of scientific concepts to argue in support of their claims.

In addition to writing arguments, students should have opportunities to respond to a variety of different types of arguments.

Some examples of different genres of argument writing that could be used for modeling arguments are:

- Political posters
- Political cartoons
- Science magazine articles
- History magazine articles
- Advertisements
- Letters/essays
- Illustrations/Photographs
- Editorials

Research Base: Argument Writing

The Common Core Standards state in Appendix A that,

“in English language arts, students make claims about the worth or meaning of a literary work or works. They defend their interpretations or judgments with evidence from the text(s) they are writing about. In history/social studies, students analyze evidence from multiple primary and secondary sources to advance a claim that is best supported by the evidence, and they argue for a historically or empirically situated interpretation. In science, students make claims in the form of statements or conclusions that answer questions or address problems. Using data in a scientifically acceptable form, students marshal evidence and draw on their understanding of scientific concepts to argue in support of their claims. Although young children are not able to produce fully developed logical arguments, they develop a variety of methods to extend and elaborate their work by providing examples, offering reasons for their assertions, and explaining cause and effect. These kinds of expository structures are steps on the road to argument.”

An argument’s intent is to make a point or claim and substantiate it with evidence. Arguments have a variety of purposes, not all of which are aimed at winning. In Appendix A of this document, a list of the purposes for which arguments are written and examples of each will assist educators in making decisions about the many purposes an argument may be set up in their classrooms. Many arguments are based on emotions, character, or based on facts and reason. There are Latin terms for these that some may recall: Pathos, Ethos and Logos, respectively. Once students can identify the type of argument they may be dealing with, the examination or analysis of this type of writing becomes quite simple along with the construct of an argument they may be asked to write.

“Emotional arguments, or pathos, generate emotions in readers to shape their responses and dispose them to accept a claim” (Lunsford, 2010). Arguments based on emotion are used when the purpose is to persuade or to convince the reader to take an action. There are a number of ways to do this such as attempting to connect to the personal experiences of the reader, help the reader identify with the writers’ personal experiences, or making logical claims that may go against an audience’s viewpoints. Photographs and images assist in adding influence to an emotional argument.

Ethos or ethical appeals are character arguments. Once a writer builds credibility by emphasizing that values are shared with the audience and respect is shared with the opponents, authority and integrity are established. Many cultural or organizational representations can be considered ethical appeals such as flags, logos, or badges. Companies work diligently at branding themselves to earn trust, respect and even loyalty from consumers. The branding that is done through advertising campaigns and logos that are created is not only to grasp the attention of a consumer but is to carry the integrity of an institution as well.

Finally, logos, or logical arguments are based on facts, reasons, and evidence. Logos arguments are usually displayed by making a statement or claim and then providing the proof or supporting evidence. With the internet available to all and no scrutinizing of sources, it is especially important for students to become adept at validating the reliability of facts that are gathered and collected from all resources. Numbers, surveys, and polls are one way to support logos arguments however; they have the potential to be shaped by writers who may have agendas. For example, politicians can use the same survey or poll to cite celebration in one camp or a cause for alarm in another camp. Students need to be prepared to ask questions of headlines and read beyond the journalist summaries when reading logical arguments. Personal experiences can also support a claim with testimonies and narratives. Consider victims of a tornado or flooding incident and how their stories might impact a petition for a grant from a governmental agency.

The Toulmin argument is the shaping of a credible argument that many use today as informal logic. It is outlined in Appendix B by the work of George Hillocks, Jr. The structure of argument and the definitions of the supporting evidence are defined in Hillocks work. Students should also begin to read arguments and compose analysis of how well the arguments persuade or move an audience. Political cartoons, editorials and even movie advertisements are a place to begin rhetorical analysis.

Appendix A

Purposes for Writing Argument

(table created from information gathered from Lunsford, 2010)

| Purpose of Argument | Definition/Example |
|---------------------|---|
| Persuade | To change a point of view, to move others from conviction to action, or win a point. An example is using an advertisement that plays on emotions such as yellowing teeth to purchase whitening toothpaste. |
| Convince | Object is to convince readers rather than win out over contenders. Forms of convincing arguments are found in white papers, reports and academic articles. |
| Inform | Tells audience members something they are unaware of or don't know. General examples are: political or movies posters, bumper stickers, notices of meetings, newspaper headlines, or billboards simply stating something exists. |
| Explore | Usually the writer uses a current trend or status quo of a possible societal problem, informs the reader, and therefore the reader/writer considers solutions that may project change. For example, reading an essay about global warming, the writer might inform the reader and propose actions that might propel change as a reflection on the part of the writer or the reader. |
| Make decisions | An argument to make a decision may begin as an exploratory argument and result in a decision making argument. They are closely aligned. These arguments appear in the public arena where the pros and cons of a topic are weighed, or any topic where there are several alternatives. |
| Academic arguments | "Held to the standards of a professional field or discipline, such as psychology, engineering, political science, or English. It is an argument presented to knowledgeable people by writers who are striving to make an honest case that is based on the best research available, with all of its sources documented carefully." (Lunsford, 2010). The best examples of these are journal articles, white papers, and published research papers. |
| Meditate or pray | An argument that takes on a mantra of sorts in the form of intense meditation. It suggests emotions or can cause a writer or reader to reach a state of peace. An example would be poetry, lyrics in a song, or as Lunsford's book suggests, stained glass windows in churches where people may pause to consider the messages conveyed. |

Kinds of Arguments

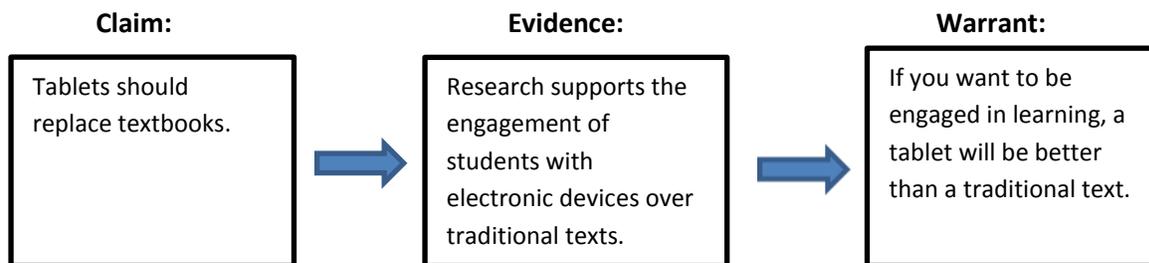
(table created from information gathered from Lunsford, 2010)

| Kinds of Arguments | Definition/Example |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Arguments of Fact | Has statements that can be proved or disproved with specific evidence and testimony. Scientific data and studies are usually involved but the questions are not easily proved or measured. An example might be the case for global warming. Readers have to agree on a definition of global warming, how it is to be measured, what the causal factors may be, such as pollution, how pollution is being measured, if human action is attributing to it and if the actions are changed, to what degree can deviations attribute to the human actions? |
| Arguments of Definition | "Involves determining whether one known object or action belongs in a second, and more highly contested, category." (Lunsford, 2010). Examples of these are usually highly charged and debatable topics such as should illegal immigrants who are convicted of a crime be deported from the US? There is a highly complex issue that begs to be defined however, some arguments can be less weighty such as is milk good for children? Visit www.procon.org for other debatable issues. |
| Arguments of Evaluation and Causality | Present criteria and standards against "people, things or ideas." (Lunsford, 2010). A claim is made and evidence is created to check against it argumentatively for evaluation. An example is posting which vacuum cleaner is the best and why. Causality is used in "political, social, and scientific controversies." It is "used to show why something has happened, what factors have shaped the situation or might happen in the future as the result of actions taken now." (Lunsford, 2010). An example is the case for global warming, why it's occurring, such as pollution, but in this situation a writer would make a case for recycling. The argument states a cause and examines its effects or states the effects and traces the effect back to the cause. |
| Proposal Arguments | Prove there is a problem and argue there is an action that needs to be taken. An example would be posing a question such as do violent video games contribute to youth violence? The writer would then take a stance. The question is usually appealing to the audience, focuses on the future, and leads a call for action. They are found in editorials and letters to the editor. |

Appendix B
Elements of an Argument
(Based on G. Hillocks, Jr., 2011)

Hillocks adapted argument construct from Stephen Toulmin.

1. **Claims:** This is considered a thesis statement or a good argument that is based on data or evidence. Students analyze data or information first and formulate questions from examining facts and figures. This analysis gives them the opportunity to look for a problem or a claim. This becomes the thesis statement. For example, if a student was to read several articles about using tablets in a classroom, they might formulate a claim “Tablets should replace textbooks in the 6-12 classroom.”
2. **Evidence:** This supports the answer to the claim. It must be relevant and verifiable. A person in the discipline of the field of study should be the expert so the data cannot be criticized or “impeached.” In the claim that tablets should replace textbooks, a writer would have evidence from technology professors that have conducted studies from a respectable university regarding the support of utilizing tablets in the classroom or supporting data from normed tests that students perform better using tablets. Often, this only has to be one piece, not an exhaustive list.
3. **Warrants:** This gives the authority for the writer to proceed with the case. This is generally a value or principle that can be shared with the reader and connects the claim to the evidence to the warrant. “The warrant may be simply common sense rules that people accept as generally true, laws, scientific principles or studies, and thoughtfully argued definitions.” (Hillocks, 2011). Below is a chart that continues the process of the tablet concept.



4. **Backing:** specifically supports the warrants. This is the heart of the argument because the claims, evidence and warrant are the outline or skeleton of the argument. The backing is the ‘intensity’ or background to make the case. Therefore, in the suggested example of the tablet vs. textbooks, this is where several examples of students achieving better with tablets, research supporting engagement, personal experiences, etc. will need to satisfy the readers.
5. **Qualifiers and Counter arguments:** Finally, using qualifying phrases make writing more precise or honest such as: more or less, it may be, it is possible, sometimes, etc. This makes an argument more plausible and reasonable. Counter arguments or reactions to your own claims where reasonable objections could be understood are essential because it allows the writer to gain credibility and authority. Consider our ongoing tablet vs. traditional text argument, an author of this would gain credibility in acknowledging that the early onset cost of tablets may be high for a district to employ, however, the long term costs would outweigh the initial setback and support the statement with research.

Appendix C

Analysis of an Argument (adapted from Lunsford, 2010)

These questions should be asked when analyzing a written essay or an argument given in a spoken platform. Depending on the grade level, not all questions may be utilized.

1. What is the purpose of the argument? Is it emotional, logical, or ethical?
2. What is the writer or speaker attempting to persuade the audience to do? Or what are they trying to achieve?
3. Who else might be supporting the writer or the speaker?
4. What kind of argument is it and how does that affect the argument?
5. What values are attached to the argument? How does it make the writer seem trustworthy?
6. What authorities does the argument rely on?
7. What facts, logic and evidence are used in the argument?
8. What claims are advanced? Are there any issues that are ignored, possibly with intent?
9. Is this argument based on cultural, social, political, or historical issues? Does a group stand to gain or lose something by sharing the argument? Is there a particular interest that is served?
10. How does the language, style, or even media of the argument work to persuade the audience?

Bibliography

Hillocks, Jr., G. (2011). *Teaching argument writing grades 6-12: Supporting claims with relevant evidence and clear reasoning*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Lunsford, A. Ruskiewicz, J., & Walters, J. (2010). *Everything's an argument*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St Martin's.

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers. (2010). *Common core state standards*. Washington D.C.: National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, Council of Chief State School Officers.