Writers Workshop Unit of Study
7th Grade – Argument Paragraph

ELA Common Core Standards

Prove Your Point
Writers Workshop Unit of Study
7th Grade – Argument Paragraph

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Preface

The following unit supports and aligns to the Common Core State Standards. This research-based work is the outcome of a collective effort made by numerous secondary teachers from around the state of Michigan. Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) initiated a statewide collaborative project, bringing together educators from around the state to create and refine a K-12 English Language Arts model curriculum. This one unit is situated within a yearlong sequence of units. Depending upon the unit’s placement in the yearlong scope and sequence, it will be important to recognize prior skills and content this unit expects learners to have. This unit also has a later, companion argument-writing unit, in which writers build upon the foundational understandings this unit establishes. Each unit presents a string of teaching points that scaffold and spiral the content and skills. The unit is structured to be student-centered rather than teacher-driven. Sessions emphasize student engagement and strive to increase critical thinking and writing skills simultaneously. Writing and thinking processes are stressed and are equally important to the end writing product. Sessions are designed as a series of mini-lessons that allow time to write, practice, and conference. Through summative and formative assessments specific to each unit, students will progress toward becoming independent thinkers and writers.

Significant input and feedback was gathered both in the initial conceptualizing of the unit and later revisions. Teachers from around the state piloted and/or reviewed the unit, and their feedback and student artifacts helped in the revision process. Special thanks go to lead unit writer Delia DeCourcy, who closely studied the CCSS, translated the standards into curriculum and practice, and revised with a close eye to classroom teacher feedback. Throughout the yearlong collaborative project, teachers reviewing units are finding how students’ habits of mind have shifted from task-oriented to big-picture thinking, utilizing a critical literacy lens.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle School Argument Writing Unit Learning Progression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Make &amp; Support a Claim</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter of Complaint</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Focus</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generating ideas for argument writing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Craft the argument and logically connect the evidence to each point.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proposal Essay</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Develop Complex Commentary</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Op-Ed</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creating/Planning</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Drafting</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revision</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Op-Ed</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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| Revising and Editing | • Examine the persuasiveness of the claim and evidence.  
• Reconsider the organization of the evidence.  
• Edit for grammar and spelling.  
• Reflect on the process to learn from the experience.  
• Publish for an authentic audience. | • Provide and receive constructive feedback.  
• Reconsider evidence.  
• Try different organizational strategies.  
• Edit for grammar and spelling. | • Revise content and structure.  
• Edit for grammar (fragments and run-ons) and spelling.  
• Reflect on the process to learn from the experience.  
• Publish for an authentic audience. | • Provide and receive constructive feedback.  
• Reconsider evidence.  
• Try different organizational strategies.  
• Edit for grammar and spelling. | • Revise content and structure.  
• Edit for grammar (commas and dashes) and spelling.  
• Reflect on the process to learn from the experience.  
• Publish for an authentic audience. | • Provide and receive constructive feedback.  
• Reconsider evidence.  
• Try different organizational strategies.  
• Edit for grammar and spelling. | • Revise content and structure.  
• Edit for grammar (commas and dashes) and spelling.  
• Reflect on the process to learn from the experience.  
• Publish for an authentic audience. |
| Learning Progressions for High School Argumentative Writing: Basics of Argumentation |
|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| **Text**          | **9th Grade** | **10th Grade** | **11th Grade** |
| **Focus**       | Advertisements     | Film           | Primary Research           |
| **Becoming a Critical Reader of Argument** | Connect prior knowledge about the persuasion in these ways: 1. Consumers are bombarded with arguments that may seem invisible. 2. Products are marketed for their real and perceived values. Define methods and sub-genres in the field of marketing and advertisement. | Review prior knowledge about the basics of argument. o Argument is a basic of daily life. o People encounter argumentative claims in daily living: news, reading, conversation, online blogs. o Elements: claim, evidence, counterclaims, and explanation. Read film as an argumentative text to become a critical citizen, studying and voicing opinions about problems that create concerns for society. Identify the multiple claims in a film, exploring/exposing various aspects of a social or political issue. Identify a claim of personal interest and collect evidence from the film to support the claim. Study the elements of film critique to prepare for writing an argumentative film critique. | Engage in reading the world as a reflective observer, constructing facts and claims about the ways we acquire or use power in social settings. Read print and digital texts, and develop claims based on reflective observation and primary research of individuals in a public sphere. Explore evidence after reflecting on information gathered from reading about power. Focus and clarify multiple angles or claims that might be taken from the evidence. Engage in conversations with others who study power in social settings. Compare and propose issues that matter and actions that might be considered. |
| **Exploring Ideas—Generating, Planning, and Drafting** | Inquire through search and reflection to identify the stances or positions advertisers use to persuade buyers. Consider persuasion for both impulse and planned consumerism. Collect and analyze evidence to develop and support claims about effective methods used by advertisers. Compare and analyze methods used by various advertisements. Develop a claim based on evidence collected through exploration of marketing methods, purposes, and effectiveness of advertisements. Focus an essay by developing multiple | Research the social issue and claim of personal interest to identify the valid and invalid evidence used in the film. Develop a claim about the effectiveness of the film’s portrayal and defense of a social issue. Collect and evaluate evidence to support a claim. Organize the key points, evidence, reasons and explanations to develop a line of reasoning that will convince a reader and support the claim. | Identify a single claim that seems most interesting based on evidence gathered through primary and secondary research. Organize the evidence to develop a line of reasoning, planning the structure and transitions in the essay. Write a first draft, utilizing the basic elements of an argumentative essay: claim, counterclaim, evidence and explanation. |
claims to anticipate alternate views or counterclaims.
- Identify relevant evidence, reasons and explanations.
- Plan an argumentative essay based on research.
- Write a first draft using a variety of evidence to convince a reader.

### Developing Ideas—Revising and Editing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revise</td>
<td>by outlining and annotating a first draft to identify the elements of an argument: claim, counterclaim, evidence (a variety), and explanation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate</td>
<td>explanation and insert or rethink the explanation to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. connect</td>
<td>the explanation to the evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. increase</td>
<td>the clarity of the explanation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. increase</td>
<td>the validity of the argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revise</td>
<td>by rereading, and identify the academic/topical vocabulary used in the essay. Insert or thread “insider” language used by advertisers into the essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edit</td>
<td>using a checklist of common errors that might include: spelling, punctuation, control of syntax, sentence variety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trace</td>
<td>the diction to identify methods of appeal, and trace diction to reduce and control emotional appeal and develop logical appeal and tone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revisit</td>
<td>the conclusion to clarify and extend the argument, utilizing research on the issue to extend the essay into new thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edit</td>
<td>for sentence variety, considering punctuation present in more sophisticated sentence structures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Revise the order and structure of the essay to:
  1. make connections.
  2. identify and repair diction.
  3. identify and repair evidence, considering validity and bias.
  4. create a logical relationship between evidence, claims, counterclaims, and explanation.
  5. increase clarity and reasoning.
  6. trace diction to identify methods of appeal, and trace diction to reduce and control emotional appeal and develop logical appeal and tone.
- Edit words, punctuation, sentences, correcting for common errors.
- Develop sentence variety to engage a reader.
## Learning Progressions for High School Argumentative Writing: Argumentative Genres

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Personal Essay</th>
<th>Op-Ed</th>
<th>Editorial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Becoming a Critical Reader of Argument</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect prior knowledge about personal narratives to personal essays.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Engage in reading about the world to become a critical citizen, studying and voicing opinions about problems that create concerns for society.</td>
<td>Engage in reading about the world to become a critical citizen, studying and voicing opinions about problems that create concerns for society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Writers of personal narratives create a plot line by organizing stories into a sequential story line, which enables readers to make connections and inferences to identify the central idea or theme.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Study the genre of op-ed articles to develop a menu of writing decisions that will allow for a successful op-ed in a multi-draft writing process.</td>
<td>Study the genre of editorial articles to develop a menu of writing decisions that will enable a successful editorial in a multi-draft writing process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Writers of personal essays create a line of reasoning by organizing stories of personal experience with other types of evidence to support a claim.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Identify the audience of the article and author bias to evaluate the validity of an author’s argument.</td>
<td>Identify the audience of the article and author bias to evaluate the validity of an author’s argument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trace a line of reasoning in a personal essay to connect the claim, evidence (personal stories), comments (explanation), and counterclaims.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Engage in conversations with peers about world issues and propose actions that can improve these issues.</td>
<td>Engage in conversations with peers about world issues and propose actions that can improve these issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotate personal essays to notice and name the elements of argumentative essays.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Evaluate op-eds to determine which article is most effective.</td>
<td>Evaluate editorials to determine which article is most effective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exploring Ideas—Generating, Planning, and Drafting</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore an idea or topic in various ways:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o positive and negative emotions connected to an idea or topic</td>
<td></td>
<td>Develop a habit of reading and responding to the world to identify conflicts and their impact on individuals. Use this habit to create an inquiry on a topic/problem/issue of personal interest.</td>
<td>Develop a habit of reading and responding to the world to identify conflicts and their impact on individuals. Use this habit to create an inquiry on a topic/problem/issue of personal interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o personal dialogue to explore various beliefs on an idea or topic</td>
<td></td>
<td>Explore a topic of interest to see it from multiple angles and perspectives.</td>
<td>Explore a topic of interest to see it from multiple angles and perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o collection of stories that illustrates a belief</td>
<td></td>
<td>Engage in primary and secondary research to gather information about the topic of interest.</td>
<td>Engage in primary and secondary research to gather information about the topic of interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o multiple angles to discover new thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td>Experiment with a variety of elements to structure and develop a line of reasoning.</td>
<td>Experiment with a variety of elements to structure and develop a line of reasoning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read mentor texts to study how essays connect.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Write a first draft using a repertoire of</td>
<td>Write a first draft using a repertoire of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify evidence to support a belief.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developing Ideas — Revising and Editing</th>
<th>writing decisions (craft and structure).</th>
<th>writing decisions (craft and structure).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Experiment with a variety of structures to develop a line of reasoning in order to write a first draft.</td>
<td>• Revise the order and structure of the essay to create a line of reasoning that creates a logical relationship between evidence, claims, counterclaims, and explanation.</td>
<td>• Revise the order and structure of the essay to create a line of reasoning that creates a logical relationship between evidence, claims, counterclaims, and explanation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Revise the order and structure of the essay to create a line of reasoning that creates a logical relationship between evidence, claims, counterclaims, and explanation.</td>
<td>• Reflect on the decisions you have made that develop a focus, controlling idea, and logical development of the argument.</td>
<td>• Reflect on the decisions you have made that develop a focus, controlling idea, and logical development of the argument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reflect on the decisions that develop a focus, controlling idea, and logical development of the argument.</td>
<td>• Trace the diction to identify methods of appeal, and trace diction to reduce and control emotional appeal and develop logical appeal and tone.</td>
<td>• Trace the diction to identify methods of appeal and, and trace diction to reduce and control emotional appeal and develop logical appeal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Revise by studying and creating concise stories that serve as evidence and make clear points to support the claim.</td>
<td>• Edit words, sentences, and punctuation.</td>
<td>• Edit on the word, sentence and punctuation level, identifying and correcting common errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Edit words, sentences, and punctuation.</td>
<td>• Develop sentence variety to engage a reader.</td>
<td>• Develop sentence variety to engage a reader.</td>
</tr>
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Writers Workshop Unit of Study
7th Grade – Argument Paragraph

Abstract

Sequencing with Other Units
This unit should be taught early in the academic year. With its emphasis on developing a claim, supporting it with evidence, and crafting relevant commentary, the unit can act as a foundational unit for all other expository writing. The concepts introduced here should be reviewed and built on as the year progresses. The development and support of an opinion in this unit highlights the ongoing need for students to find their writing voices, something teachers can also support through full-class discussions and small-group discussion, in addition to informal, generative writing in which students explore their ideas and are not graded.

This unit works best following a non-fiction reading unit, since the texts can act as a springboard and model for the writing. While students should be provided with a prompt around which to craft an argument, we strongly suggest providing some choice in the writing topic to increase student investment and agency in the writing task.

If you use this unit as a standalone unit, select a theme or central topic around which to focus. For example, you could have students write about a school-wide initiative (recycling, respect, bullying) or topic around a theme in an upcoming text (independence or utopia for The Giver etc.) With any of these topics, evidence can come in the form of facts and statistics, as well as personal experience, interviews, and textual evidence.

Writing Workshop Approach
A foundational belief of this unit is that writing is a series of choices a writer makes—not a formula students follow or a worksheet they fill in. To that end, the handouts and sessions provide choice for the novice argument writer—choice in topic, organizational structure, and evidence types. If we provide our students with a rigid graphic organizer and ask them to fill it in, they are not learning to become independent writers and thinkers. Similarly, if we set them off to write an argument paragraph without enough scaffolding, they will flounder. But by showing writers the various options available to them as novice crafters of an argument, they can make choices about their content and structure and continue to become more autonomous in their writing.

The mentor-text sessions and prewriting sessions in this unit are especially important in helping to establish students’ writerly independence during the drafting phase. The introduction of mentor texts helps students understand what they are striving for, to see what is expected and how all the pieces work together. In addition, engaging in a variety of pre-writing activities will allow students to explore, eliminate, and select ideas, claims, and evidence. This experimentation will keep the argument-paragraph-writing process from becoming formulaic. While there are particular elements that students must include in a well-formed paragraph, the claims they make and evidence they provide should be unique from student to student.

The unit asks students to reflect on their writing experiences and choices at the end of the unit. The inclusion of reflection is another move toward helping students become more independent in their thinking and writing. As students become more aware of the reasons behind their choices during a writing task, and what the outcome of those choices are, and how they arrived at their final product, they will become increasingly more confident as writers and thinkers, better able to self-direct their own learning processes. The goal is for them to see the teacher as a resource in the writing process rather than the person who steers the ship.

Key Terms
Argument
- In life -- conflicts that use language.
- In writing -- opinions that can be backed up with evidence.

Persuasion – to move another person or group to agree with a belief or position through argument, appeal, or course of action.
**Fact** – information that is certain and can be proven.

**Debatable Claim** – an opinion that is a matter of personal experience and values that must be backed up with evidence. Others can disagree with this claim.

**Evidence** – details, facts, and reasons that directly relate to and support a debatable claim.

- **Anecdotal Evidence** – evidence based on personal observation and experience, often in the form of a brief story. Can come from the writer, friends, family, and acquaintances.

- **Factual Evidence** – data, confirmed facts, and research performed by experts. Found by the writer performing research.

**Commentary** – sentences in an argument paragraph that explain what is important about the evidence and tell the reader how it proves and supports the claim.

**Topic Sentences** – the first sentence of a paragraph, which provides a promise to the reader about what is to come. In an argument paragraph, the topic sentence must contain a debatable claim and should provide a sense of the evidence that is to come.

**Subordinating Conjunctions** – words and phrases such as *because, even though, since, if, when, and while* are helpful in crafting commentary and topic sentences because they point to the relationship between the claim and the evidence.
Standards

Common Core Standards: Argument Writing: The following College and Career Readiness (CCR) anchor standards apply to reading and writing in narrative template tasks. Refer to the 6-12 standards for grade-appropriate specifics that fit each task and module being developed. The standards numbers and general content remain the same across all grades, but details vary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>CCR Anchor Standards for Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CCR Anchor Standards for Writing Arguments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>CCR Anchor Standards for Writing Arguments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overview of Sessions- Teaching Points and Unit Assessments

1. Pre-Unit Assessment Task
To figure out which skills you need to focus on and further develop for a particular kind of writing task, it’s helpful to attempt that writing task, review the results, and assess where you need the most improvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-Unit Assessment Task</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During a single class period, have students write an argument paragraph that makes a debatable claim that is supported with a variety of evidence types and contains commentary.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TEACHING POINTS:

GENERATING IDEAS FOR ARGUMENT WRITING

2. Arguments and Claims
Arguments persuade the reader to believe a debatable claim by providing effective evidence. A debatable claim is an opinion, while effective evidence is made up of facts, details, and reasons that directly relate to and prove the claim.

3. Evidence
Writers use two types of evidence in argument pieces: factual and anecdotal. Factual evidence is statistics, confirmed facts, and expert research. Anecdotal evidence is the writer’s personal experience, the experience of family and friends, and the experience of reliable acquaintances and interviewees.

DRAFTING

4. Understanding the Prompt and Pre-writing to Discover Your Claim
   a. Writers closely examine the writing prompt to ensure they understand what they are being asked to do.
   b. To develop a debatable claim, a writer must first study the evidence on the topic and ask, “What is this evidence telling me?” They free write to answer this question, research to further examine evidence, and then begin to generate ideas that may become the claim.

5. & 6. Drafting Claim and Evidence
Writers use only the best evidence that will most effectively support their claims and persuade the reader to agree with their points of view. For evidence to be effective, it must come from a variety of credible sources and be correctly cited.

7. Drafting Commentary
Writers provide commentary to explain to the reader how the evidence proves the claim.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mid-Unit Assessment Task</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instruct students to revisit the commentary they wrote during the pre-writing phrase (session 4) and to highlight or underline any sentences they think could be useful for this draft of the paragraph to prove the debatable claim and explain evidence. Next, revisit the Drafting Commentary Anchor Chart - Strong Commentary Verbs list with students and encourage them to use these verbs as they write commentary for their evidence. Finally, instruct students to free write answers for the Drafting Commentary Anchor Chart - Three Commentary Questions for each piece of evidence they have selected to support their argument.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optional Lesson (for students with more advanced writing skills)
Ways of Organizing an Argument Paragraph
There are many ways to structure an argument paragraph. Writers must decide how to arrange the commentary and evidence to best reflect the logic of their argument and most effectively persuade the reader to agree with the debatable claim.

Optional Lesson (for students with more advanced writing skills)
Transitions
Transition words and phrases define relationships between ideas. In an argument paragraph, they show the reader how the commentary and the evidence are connected.

8. Topic Sentences
   a. A topic sentence begins a paragraph and is a promise to the reader about what to expect in the paragraph.
   b. When crafting argument paragraphs, writers include the claim and a summary of evidence in the topic sentence.

REVISING AND EDITING
9. Revision
Writers revise throughout the drafting process. When argument writers have completed a draft, they revisit all the components of the piece to make sure it is as persuasive as possible.

10. Editing and Reflection
   a. Writers closely edit their pieces to make sure they don’t have any sentence fragments or run-ons, which make it difficult for the reader to understand the argument.
   b. When a draft is revised and complete, writers reflect on the final product and process to determine what they will do differently the next time they take on a writing task.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-Unit Assessment Task</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We all have plenty of opinions, but can you support yours to create a strong argument? For this writing task, you will identify and build an argument in response to a prompt by crafting a debatable claim, supporting it with evidence, and explaining that evidence with commentary to persuade your reader. Whether you’re arguing about the best television show or why a character is a hero, you must show your reader how you arrived at this conclusion by laying out your thinking in the form of a claim and supporting evidence. Your argument will be one paragraph in length, so it should be focused on one central idea and provide enough evidence to persuade your reader that your argument is strong. One piece of evidence should be from a credible secondary source. (Though this assessment is listed after the final session, students will have worked on this paragraph for several sessions.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Argument Paragraph Rubric – Prove Your Point

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>On-Target</th>
<th>Novice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>The paragraph:</td>
<td>The paragraph:</td>
<td>The paragraph:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Creates a unified and persuasive argument; every sentence supports the key claim.</td>
<td>• Creates a fairly unified and persuasive argument; almost all sentences support the key claim.</td>
<td>• Struggles to create a unified and persuasive argument; multiple sentences do not directly support the key claim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contains a topic sentence with a debatable claim and summary of the evidence.</td>
<td>• Contains a topic sentence with a debatable claim and summary of the evidence.</td>
<td>• Contains a topic sentence with either a debatable claim or summary of the evidence, but not both.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Employs multiple evidence types, including a secondary source.</td>
<td>• Employs a variety of evidence types, including a secondary source.</td>
<td>• Employs only one evidence type.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• All sources are credible and properly cited.</td>
<td>• Most sources are credible and properly cited.</td>
<td>• Sources are not credible; citations are missing or incorrect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Includes commentary that intricately and complexly explains how the evidence proves the claim.</td>
<td>• Includes commentary that explains how the evidence proves the claim.</td>
<td>• Commentary missing or does not fully explain how the evidence proves the claim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>The paragraph:</td>
<td>The paragraph:</td>
<td>The paragraph:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shifts seamlessly back and forth between evidence and commentary.</td>
<td>• Logically flows between evidence and commentary.</td>
<td>• Struggles to organize evidence and commentary in a logical manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Style &amp; Mechanics</strong></td>
<td>The paragraph:</td>
<td>The paragraph:</td>
<td>The paragraph:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contains no fragments or run-ons; engages complex sentence structures.</td>
<td>• Contains minimal fragments or run-ons.</td>
<td>• Contains multiple fragments or run-ons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consistently maintains a formal voice.</td>
<td>• Maintains a formal voice throughout with only occasional lapses.</td>
<td>• Is written in an informal voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Readily employs diction specific to the chosen topic.</td>
<td>• Employs diction specific to the chosen topic.</td>
<td>• Occasionally employs diction specific to the chosen topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process Checklist</strong></td>
<td>The writer:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Pre-wrote to discover ideas for a debatable claim.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Drafted to organize and analyze evidence and devise commentary.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Revised his/her draft to achieve greater coherency and clarity.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o Edited for sentence-level clarity and an error-free essay.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Copyright © 2010-2017 by the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators and Oakland Schools.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>PRE-UNIT ASSESSMENT TASK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Point</td>
<td>To figure out which skills you need to focus on and further develop for a particular kind of writing task, it’s helpful to attempt that writing task, review the results, and assess where you need the most improvement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Preparation   | Create a constructed-response prompt that asks your students to take a position on a given topic and support their claim with evidence. Below is a model—the sample prompt used in this unit.  

After reading the excerpt from “Why McDonald’s Fries Taste So Good” by Eric Schlosser, develop an argument for why people should or should not eat fast food. Use evidence from Schlosser’s article, as well as evidence from another outside source. Be sure to employ a variety of evidence types: anecdote, facts, reasons, experts, etc. To ensure that your reader is persuaded by your argument, explain your evidence through well-written commentary. End the paragraph with a strong statement that summarizes your point. |
| Active Engagement | During a single class period, have students write an argument paragraph that makes a debatable claim that is supported with a variety of evidence types and contains commentary.  

Assess the results of the pre-unit assessment task using the Argument Paragraph Rubric, focusing on students’ understanding of the concepts of claim, evidence, and commentary, as well as their ability to logically organize an argument paragraph. This task will help you assess how much depth you need to go into regarding argument concepts and paragraph parts. In addition, you will be able to identify students for whom you might compact some of this curricular material or who need remediation. |
The Elements of Argument

Session 2

Concept

Arguments and Claims

Teaching Point

Arguments persuade the reader to believe a debatable claim by providing effective evidence. A debatable claim is an opinion, while effective evidence is made up of facts, details, and reasons that directly relate to and prove the claim.

Suggested Materials

- Argument Concepts Anchor Chart (see attached sheet)
- Take a Stand handout (see attached sheet)
- Argument Videos
  - Seinfeld Pizza Argument [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lOG3rD5CrQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lOG3rD5CrQ)
  - Seinfeld Giving Cash as a Gift [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQlhrrqTQmU&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQlhrrqTQmU&feature=related)

Preparation

- Review the Argument Concepts Anchor Chart
- Select and prepare the students who will perform the argument dramatization or select a Youtube video that illustrates the concept of argument and will appeal to your students.
  Alter the Take a Stand handout so the items reflect the interests of the students in your classroom.

Active Engagement

1. The Road Ahead: Your Goal
   Full Class
   - Share the final goal of this unit with your students—to write a strong argument paragraph. If you had them complete the pre-unit assessment, this is a good time to hand those back and help students understand what they most need to work on in this unit.
   - Review the concept and purpose of a paragraph as needed.
     - A group of sentences that focuses on a single idea.
     - The sentences are presented to the reader in a logical order so the reader understands the writer’s thinking.
     - Begins with a clear statement of what the paragraph will be about.
   - Share this session’s teaching point with the students by putting it on the board, emphasizing that this is an argument unit and that argument is one of the key types of writing they will use throughout their lives.
   - As a group, have the students highlight, underline, or circle all the terms in the teaching point that they don’t know the meaning of. It might look something like this:
     Arguments persuade the reader to believe a debatable claim by providing effective evidence. A debatable claim is an opinion, while effective evidence is made up of facts, details and reasons that directly relate to and prove the claim.
   - Assure your students that by the end of the class today, they will have a better understanding of all these terms.

2. Argument: Key Concepts
   Full Class – Argument Dramatization
   - Select two of your more performance-savvy students to engage in the dramatization of an argument. You’ll need to prep them ahead of time.
     - Provide the students with a topic that is highly relevant to them—a school issue or decision about a hypothetical situation.
     - Ask them to take opposite sides of the argument and let them know that their goal is to convince the other person to agree with them.
     - Let the students argue about the topic so the rest of the class hears their stances (claims) and reasons (evidence). This shouldn’t be too rehearsed, though you don’t want it to go on so long that the students get repetitive.
   - As an alternative, show a brief video depicting an argument
     - Seinfeld Pizza Argument [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lOG3rD5CrQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lOG3rD5CrQ)
     - Seinfeld Giving Cash as a Gift [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQlhrrqTQmU&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQlhrrqTQmU&feature=related)
Discussion

- Pause the scene:
  - Ask the students to name each arguing arguer’s claim/stance.
  - Define debatable claim using the Argument Concepts Anchor Chart.
  - Ask students to name the reasons/evidence each person provided.
  - Which were most relevant and effective? How come?
  - Define evidence using the Argument Concepts Anchor Chart.
- Ask the class who had the more persuasive/convincing argument and why?
- Define argument and persuasion using the Argument Concepts Anchor Chart.
- Ask your students to create a simple mathematical statement of the components that compose a persuasive argument given the previous exercise.

ARGUMENT = DEBATABLE CLAIM + EVIDENCE

3. Claims and Evidence Practice

Full Class Activity – Take a Stand

- Ask your students to review the difference between fact and opinion. Remind them that opinions are claims.
- Explain that they are about to engage in an activity that asks them to state opinions and evidence to prove those opinions. When they’ve finished recording their opinions and evidence, they’ll “vote with their feet” and share their opinions and evidence.
- Have your students complete the Take a Stand handout.
- Following completion, have students get up from their seats and take part in a “Vote with Your Feet” exercise in which they go to one side of the room or the other to indicate their opinion for each item.
- Have a few students on each side of the room provide their evidence/facts for each opinion.
- Alternately, you can have the group pool their ideas and select the three strongest/most effective pieces of evidence to present to the class.
- Have the class discuss what the most effective evidence to support each opinion is and what makes it so effective.

Independent Practice – Formative Assessment Mini Task

4. Mini-Argument Mini-Task

As their pass out of class, have your students create a mini-argument that combines their claim and their evidence from one of the items in the Take a Stand activity. The mini-argument should be 1-3 sentences in length.

Examples:
I prefer to go to the beach for vacation instead of the mountains because I love the feel of the sand between my feet, I love to fish, and my favorite thing in the world is to go out on the boat.

I prefer to go to the mountains for vacation instead of the beach because I hate it when sand is everywhere, I like to hike, and I prefer cold weather.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>On-Target</th>
<th>Novice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claim</td>
<td>- debatable and multipart</td>
<td>- debatable</td>
<td>- a statement of fact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td>- provides more than 3 facts and/or reasons that support the claim</td>
<td>- provides 3 facts and/or reasons that support the claim</td>
<td>- doesn’t support the claim - provides less than 3 pieces of evidence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Argument Concepts – Anchor Chart

Debatable Claim – an opinion that is a matter of personal experience and values that must be backed up with evidence. Others can disagree with this claim. Also know as an opinion.

Evidence – details, facts, and reasons that directly relate to and support a debatable claim.

Argument
  - In life - conflicts that use language.
  - In writing - opinions that can be backed up with evidence.

Persuasion – to move another person or group to agree with a belief or position through argument, appeal, or course of action.

Claim = opinion on a topic

Evidence = facts, reasons, details
**Take a Stand Activity**

Directions:
1. For each item, state your opinion/preference one way or the other. (Yes, you must pick one.)
2. Give three pieces of effective evidence (facts, reasons, details) for why you feel this way.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1.</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chocolate or Vanilla?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Beach or Mountains?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Math or Language Arts?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sun or Snow?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hip-Hop or Country Music?</strong></td>
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</table>
The Elements of Argument

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Session 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concept</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Teaching Point | a. Arguments persuade the reader to believe a debatable claim by providing effective evidence. A debatable claim is an opinion, while evidence is made up of facts, details and reasons.  
  b. Writers use two types of evidence in argument pieces: factual and anecdotal. Factual evidence is statistics, confirmed facts, and expert research. Anecdotal evidence is the writer’s personal experience, the experience of family and friends, and the experience of reliable acquaintances and interviewees. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested Materials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Evidence Types handout (see attached sheet)  
  • Name That Evidence Type activity (see attached sheet)  
  • Evidence Types Mini-Task handout (see attached sheet) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review the handouts and activities and revise them as needed for your population of students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Effective Evidence = Persuasive Argument  
  Full Class – Discussion and Defining Evidence Types |
| • Ask your students:  
  o How do you persuade your parents to change their minds when they won’t let you go to the mall or take part in an activity?  
  • Discuss persuasion and its relationship to effective evidence. Call upon examples from the previous lesson as necessary.  
  • A helpful analogy for thinking about argument is a house or building.  
  o The walls = the evidence  
  o The claim = the roof  
  o The walls hold up the roof just as the evidence supports the claim.  
  • Share the teaching points by reviewing the evidence types on the Evidence Types handout.  
  o Define anecdote: based on or consisting of reports, observations, or the telling of a story.  
  • Review the table on the Evidence Types handout with a sample claim and different types of evidence.  
  o Ask students to add their own evidence for this debatable claim and to slot it into the proper category depending on the kind of evidence it is.  
  • Challenge Question (on Evidence Types sheet) – have students respond to this question in writing, then discuss as a class. Points of discussion might include:  
  o Anecdotal evidence is just one person’s story while data, stats and research are evidence from a huge pool of people.  
  o Anecdotal evidence balances factual evidence by making it more true to life/human by providing details about actual people.  
  o If a writer provides only anecdotal evidence, the argument may be weaker since it is solely a personal argument. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guided Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2. Practice With Evidence Types  
  Small Group – Name That Evidence Type |
| • Have students complete the Name that Evidence Type! activity in small groups.  
  • Consider doing the first one or two items together as a class until students get the hang of the activity.  
  • Circulate to check on student progress, to answer questions, and to coach the students on these new concepts.  
  • To make the activity more competitive, assign points for each item that is correct and put the group’s scores up on the board. Encourage groups to go for the bonus points. |
| To make this a game show-style activity, have the groups complete each item simultaneously, record their answer on a piece of paper, hold answers up at the same time, and then assign groups points for correct answers. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Practice – Formative Assessment Mini-Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 3. Evidence Types Mini-Task  
  • Ask students to complete the Evidence Types Mini-Task table on their own to formatively assess their understanding of the concepts: debatable claim, anecdotal evidence, and factual evidence. |
- You can give your students a general topic to make a claim about (related to the current or a previous unit) or give them the freedom to devise one on their own—something of great interest that they have some knowledge about.

### Mini-Task Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>On-Target</th>
<th>Novice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claim</td>
<td>- debatable and multi-part</td>
<td>- debatable</td>
<td>- a statement of fact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anecdotal Evidence</td>
<td>- provides two pieces of differing types (personal, family, interviewee)</td>
<td>- provides two distinct pieces</td>
<td>- only one piece given or categorizes it as factual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factual Evidence</td>
<td>- provides two pieces of differing types (facts, data/statistics, expert research)</td>
<td>- provides two distinct pieces</td>
<td>- only one piece given or categorizes it as anecdotal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of Evidence</td>
<td>- all evidence directly relates to and proves the claim - this is the best evidence to prove the claim</td>
<td>- all evidence directly relates to and proves the claim</td>
<td>- some of the evidence does not relate to or prove the claim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Evidence** = details, reasons, and facts

### Anecdotal
- personal experience
- family & friends’ observations
- acquaintance or interviewee’s story

### Factual
- confirmed facts
- data & statistics
- research by experts

---

**EXAMPLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEBATABLE CLAIM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>My school lunch isn’t as healthy as it should be.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>details, brief stories, personal observations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Writer’s personal observation/experience** – Today I was served chicken nuggets, French fries, chocolate milk, a roll and a few brownish carrots and pieces of celery.

**Friends’ experience** – My friends and I always feel sluggish after lunch. Tanesha said, “I can hardly stay awake in art class after rushing through our 20 minute lunch.”

**Acquaintance’s story** – Matt, the boy I sit next to in history class, says he feels sick after eating fried chicken nuggets, which aren’t real chicken but the parts of chicken processed and pressed together.
**DEBATABLE CLAIM**  
*My school lunch isn’t as healthy as it should be.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FACTUAL EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confirmed facts</strong> - Poor diet can lead to energy imbalance and can increase one’s risk to be overweight and obese. (Center for Disease Control)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data/Statistics</strong> – A single serving of chicken nuggets (5 pieces) can contain up to 500 milligrams of sodium, the total amount of salt children should consume daily. (<a href="http://www.webmd.com">www.webmd.com</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research by experts</strong> - A 2008 study by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that by the time many healthier commodities [that are processed before being served in school lunch] reach students, “they have about the same nutritional value as junk foods.” (<em>New York Times</em>)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Challenge Question:** Why is it important to have a mix of both anecdotal and factual evidence in an argument paragraph or essay?
NAME THAT EVIDENCE TYPE!

- Label the pieces of evidence below as A for anecdotal or F for factual.
- For bonus points:
  - Indicate whether the Anecdotal Evidence is
    - P = personal
    - F = family or friends
    - A/I = acquaintance or interviewee
  - Indicate whether the Factual Evidence is
    - C = confirmed facts
    - D/S = data or statistics
    - R = research by experts

CLAIM: School lunches aren’t as healthy as they should be.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A/F?</th>
<th>Bonus!</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“A study by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2006 found that 23.5 percent of high schools offered fast food from places like Pizza Hut and Taco Bell” <em>(The New York Times)</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My friend Michelle says that at her school, French fries and pizza are options in the cafeteria every single day of the week (Chen).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“‘One of the first indications of a good lunch program is enthusiasm among the people serving the food,’ said Marion Nestle, professor of nutrition and food studies at New York University and author of <em>What to Eat</em> (North Point Press, 2007)” <em>(The New York Times)</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Last week, the only thing I ate at school for lunch was tater tots and French fries and by the time I got on the bus, I was starving and had a headache.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>According to the Cafeteria Director at Davis Elementary, who I interviewed last week, for 20 cents more per student, they could make homemade French fries that are baked instead of fried in grease (Jones).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Though the United States Department of Agriculture is requiring schools to serve healthier foods at lunch, French fries will remain on the menu because potato lobbyists persuaded Congressmen to keep them on the list of approved food. (National Public Radio—npr.org)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**NAME THAT EVIDENCE TYPE!**

**Teacher Version**

- Label the pieces of evidence below as A for anecdotal or F for factual.
- For bonus points:
  - Indicate whether the **Anecdotal Evidence** is
    - P = personal
    - F = family or friends
    - A/I = acquaintance or interviewee
  - Indicate whether the **Factual Evidence** is
    - C = confirmed facts
    - D/S = data or statistics
    - R = research by experts

---

**CLAIM:** School lunches aren’t as healthy as they should be.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>A/F?</th>
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<th>Evidence</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
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<td>“A study by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2006 found that 23.5 percent of high schools offered fast food from places like Pizza Hut and Taco Bell” (<em>The New York Times)</em>.</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>R</td>
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</table>
## Evidence Types Mini-Task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEBATABLE CLAIM:</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence Types</th>
<th>Mini-Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anecdotal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVIDENCE #1</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Factual</td>
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<tr>
<td>EVIDENCE #2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Anecdotal</td>
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<td>EVIDENCE #3</td>
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<td>Factual</td>
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<td>EVIDENCE #4</td>
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</table>
### Concept
Understanding the Prompt and Pre-writing to Discover Your Claim

### Teaching Point
**a. Writers closely examine the writing prompt to ensure they understand what they are being asked to do.**

**b. To develop a debatable claim, a writer must first study the evidence on the topic and ask, “What is this evidence telling me?” They free write to answer this question, research to further examine evidence, and then begin to generate ideas that may become the claim.**

### Quotation
Although many teachers begin to teach some version of argument with the writing of a thesis statement (a claim), in reality, good argument begins with looking at the data that is likely to become the evidence in an argument and which gives rise to a thesis statement or major claim. That is, the thesis statement arises from a question, which in turn rises from the examination of information or data of some sort.

This year, I had an opportunity to examine a set of lesson plans that began with the writing of thesis statements. There was no mention of data of any kind. Students were supposed to find problems somewhere and make some claim about them. However, without analysis of any data (verbal and nonverbal texts, materials, surveys and samples), any thesis is likely to be no more than a preconception or assumption or clichéd popular belief that is unwarranted and, at worst, totally indefensible.

For that reason, my graduate students and I have approached the teaching of argument from the examination of data, as a first step. We have tried to find data sets that require some interpretation and give rise to questions. When the data are curious and do not fit preconceptions, they give rise to questions and genuine thinking. Attempts to answer these questions become hypotheses, possible future thesis statements that we may eventually write about after further investigation. That is to say, the process of working through an argument is the process of inquiry. At its very beginning is the examination of data, not the invention of a thesis statement in a vacuum.

George Hillocks, Teaching Argument Writing, Grades 6-12

### Suggested Materials
- Dissecting the Prompt handout (see attached sheet)
- Argument Paragraph Pre-Writing handout (see attached sheet)

### Preparation
- Dissecting the Prompt handout
  - Revise this handout to reflect the constructed response prompt your students will be writing about.
  - Dissect your own writing prompt to determine how clearly and specifically it is written and then revise it as necessary.

### Teaching Point
**Writers closely examine the writing prompt to ensure they understand what they are being asked to do.**

### Active Engagement
1. **Dissecting the Prompt**
   - **Full Class**
     - Have students dissect the writing prompt using the questions on the Dissecting the Prompt handout.

### Teaching Point
**To develop a debatable claim, a writer must first study the evidence on the topic and ask, “What is this evidence telling me?” They free write to answer this question and then begin to generate ideas that may become the claim.**

### Active Engagement
2. **Argument Paragraph Pre-Writing**
   - **Solo**
     - Have students complete the steps on the Argument Paragraph Pre-Writing handout.
     - Note that this step asks them to examine evidence, so if your students need more time to gather evidence, be sure to build this into your timeline.

### Share
- **Pairs**
  - Have students share their debatable claims and their 3 most effective pieces of evidence with a partner in preparation for completing the mini-task that follows.
Independent Practice – Formative Assessment Mini-Task

Mini-Task: Debatable Claim and 3 Pieces of Evidence
As their pass out of class, have students submit a debatable claim with three pieces of evidence—at least one factual and one anecdotal. Formatively assess this work using the rubric below and determine if students have progressed in their understanding of evidence and claim.

Mini-Task Rubric

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>On-Target</th>
<th>Novice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Claim</td>
<td>- debatable and multi-part</td>
<td>- debatable</td>
<td>- a statement of fact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td>- provides three pieces, each of a different type, that directly prove the claim</td>
<td>- provides three pieces, some of similar type, that directly prove the claim</td>
<td>- not enough evidence provided; or it is all of the same type; or it does not prove the claim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dissecting the Writing Prompt

The word “dissection” is typically used in relation to biology. We dissect animals to understand the anatomy (bodily structure of an organism).

Argument Prompt:

After reading the excerpt from “Why McDonald’s Fries Taste So Good” by Eric Schlosser, develop an argument for why people should or should not eat fast food. Use evidence from Schlosser’s article, as well as evidence from another outside source. Be sure to employ a variety of evidence types: anecdotes, facts, reasons, experts, etc. To ensure that your reader is persuaded by your argument, explain your evidence through well-written commentary. End the paragraph with a strong statement that summarizes your point.

1. **Highlight** the main verbs in the prompt.

2. **Underline** the components the prompt tells you to include in your paragraph.

3. Re-read the prompt to understand the steps you will need to take to write your paragraph. List each of those steps below.

   a.

   b.

   c.

   d.

   e.
Argument Paragraph Pre-Writing

Take Out Your Writer’s Notebook...

1. Begin with evidence. In your Writer’s Notebook, write down everything you know about your chosen topic (facts, statistics, reasons, details, anecdotes, experience, observations).
   a. Re-read and examine any articles you have read on the topic in class.
   b. Perform further research on the Internet and in the library as needed.

2. Notice which pieces of your evidence are factual and which are anecdotal. You might need to balance this out later in the drafting process.

3. Examine your evidence.
   a. What does the evidence tell you?
   b. What is your opinion about this topic based on the evidence you recorded?
   c. Write a draft of your debatable claim in your Writer’s Notebook.

4. Now focus on the WHY of your argument. This means you’ll be pre-writing for commentary—an element of argument you’ll learn more about in a later lesson. Answer these questions in your Writer’s Notebook.
   a. Why is this topic/claim important?
   b. What does the evidence tell us?
   c. Why do you feel this way about this topic? Why does it concern you?
   d. Why should your readers care about this argument?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drafting</th>
<th>Session 5 &amp; 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concept</td>
<td>Drafting Claim and Evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Point</strong></td>
<td><strong>Argument writers use only the best evidence that will most effectively support their claims and persuade the reader to agree with their points of view. For evidence to be effective, it must come from a variety of credible sources and be correctly cited.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suggested Materials</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Variety of Evidence Checklist (see attached sheet)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Evaluating Web Sites Tutorial <a href="http://lib.colostate.edu/tutorials/webeval.html">http://lib.colostate.edu/tutorials/webeval.html</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Credible Sources on the Internet handout (see attached sheet)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Citing Sources handout (see attached sheet)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Review the handouts listed above.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Watch the Evaluating Web Sites tutorial.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o For more information see: <a href="http://lib.colostate.edu/howto/evalweb.html">http://lib.colostate.edu/howto/evalweb.html</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Revise the websites listed on the Credible Sources on the Internet handout as needed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Revise the Citing Sources handout to reflect the kinds of sources your students will be using in their paragraphs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o MLA In-text Citations: <a href="http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch08_s1-0001.html">http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch08_s1-0001.html</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o MLA List of Works Cited: <a href="http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch08_s1-0011.html">http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/RES5e_ch08_s1-0011.html</a></td>
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<td><strong>Argument writers use only the best evidence that will most effectively support their claims and persuade the reader to agree with their points of view. For evidence to be effective, it must come from a variety of credible sources and be correctly cited.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active Engagement</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Revisit the Claim and Evidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Introduce the teaching point.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have students revisit their claim and what they believe are the three strongest pieces of evidence in their writers’ notebooks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ask each student to complete the Variety of Evidence Checklist to determine what other kinds of evidence could be helpful in persuading their audience to agree with their claim.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Finding More Evidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group/Solo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Show your students the Evaluating Web Sites Tutorial <a href="http://lib.colostate.edu/tutorials/webeval.html">http://lib.colostate.edu/tutorials/webeval.html</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Review the Credible Sources on the Internet handout.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In small groups, have students complete the Website Credibility Activity on the handout.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reconvene as a full class to share findings. This should prompt a lively discussion about how students determined credibility—especially for sites like Wikipedia, which are controversial and whose credibility varies from entry to entry.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Send students off to find more and better evidence to support their debatable claims.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Citing Sources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Class/Solo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Engage students in a brief discussion about why sources need to be cited. Why would a reader care about where evidence comes from and how does citing make an argument more persuasive?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Gives information credibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Allows the reader to seek out more information on the topic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Independent Practice</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Review the key components of the Citing Sources handout and complete the citing example as a class.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have students practice citing their own sources and circulate to assess their understanding of citations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. **More Research Time**
   
   **Solo**
   
   Give students additional time to research to find the most effective and credible evidence for their argument.
Variety of Evidence Checklist

Check the box next to each kind of evidence you currently have for your argument.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>✔</th>
<th>FACTUAL EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confirmed facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data and statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research by experts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends’ and family’s experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee’s or acquaintance’s experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you have 2 pieces of factual evidence and 1 piece of anecdotal evidence?

What kind of evidence would most improve the persuasiveness of your argument?

What specific part of your argument should this evidence concern?
Credible Sources on the Internet

What does CREDIBLE mean?
convincing, able to be believed

How do you determine if an Internet source is credible?

WHO – Who is the author?
- If there is an “about” page, read it.
  - Is this person or organization an expert in their field?
  - What is their educational background?

WHAT – What kind of information is provided and how high is its quality?
- If the site provides a deep knowledge of your topic with references to studies and statistics, it is probably high quality.
- If the site provides only general facts, you should find better, more detailed information elsewhere.

WHERE – Where is this site on the web? What is the web address?
  .com – hosted by a company, often a site for profit, advertisements on websites suggest the information will be biased, though online magazines are often .com sites. Be careful and explore further.
  .org – hosted by a non-profit organization, reliable information depending on the background and mission of the organization. Be careful and explore further.
  .edu – hosted by an educational institution, typically reliable and expert information.
  .gov – hosted by a government institution, typically reliable and expert information.

WHEN – When was it published? Is this the most up-to-date information?

WHY – What is the author’s, organization’s, or company’s goal in publishing this information?
- Is the goal to
  - Provide excellent information to the public? – Great!
  - Persuade the audience of an argument or opinion? – Be careful!
  - Sell the readers a product? – Move on fast!
# Website Credibility Activity

**Directions:**
- Mark each website below as **C** for credible, **NC** for not credible, and then give your reason for this determination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C/NC</th>
<th>Website</th>
<th>Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|      | Healthy School Lunches  
http://www.healthyschoollunches.org/index.cfm |        |
|      | Maschio’s Food Service  
http://www.maschiofood.com/ |        |
|      | The Lunch Tray  
http://www.thelunchtray.com/ |        |
|      | Education.com  
http://www.education.com/magazine/article/school-lunch-nutrition/ |        |
|      | United States Department of Agriculture  
http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/ |        |
|      | *The New York Times*  
|      | Wikipedia  

Explain what difficulties and questions came up as you looked at these sites. What were you unsure about in terms of credibility?
Citing Sources

What does it mean to cite a source?
- An in-text citation is a note in an essay that tells the reader where a piece of information or an idea came from.
- In-text citations always appear in (parentheses).
- At the end of an essay, a writer includes a list of works cited that gives details about all the in-text citations.

Why do writers cite sources?
- To avoid plagiarism--the practice of taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own.
- To prove that the evidence is real and credible.
- To inform the reader about where to find more information on the topic.

What gets cited?
- Quoted information from a secondary source.
- Paraphrased information from a secondary source.
- Information obtained in an interview.
- Any idea that is not your own.

How do you cite a source?
- Insert the in-text citation before the period at the end of the sentence in which the quotation or paraphrase appears.
- For any in-text citation, include the first item that appears in the works-cited entry that corresponds to the citation (e.g. author name, article name, website name).
- See the list below for examples concerning different types of sources.

Articles and Essays
Include the following information in the works-cited entry in this order:
- Article's author
- Title of the article in quotations marks
- Magazine or newspaper’s title in italics
- Date of publication
- Page number
- Medium

In-Text Citation
A new study has revealed that eating school lunches is a contributor to childhood obesity (Melnick).

Works Cited Entry
**Websites & Webpages**

Include the following information in the works-cited entry in this order:
- Author and/or editor names (if available)
- Article name in quotation marks (if applicable)
- Title of the website
- Name of institution/organization publishing the site
- Date of resource creation (if available)
- Date you accessed the material.

**For websites and pages, remember to use n.p. if no publisher name is available and n.d. if no publishing date is given.**

**In-Text Citation**
The National School Lunch Program has existed since 1946 and “provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches to children each school day” (“National School Lunch Program”).

**Works-Cited Entry**

**Personal Interview**
For any information you get in an interview with a family member, friend, acquaintance or interviewee, include the following information in this order:
- name of the interviewee
- the phrase “Personal interview”
- the date of the interview

**In-Text Citation**
My friend Michelle says, “At my school, French fries and pizza are options in the cafeteria every single day of the week” (Chen).

**Works-Cited Entry**
Chen, Michelle. Personal interview. 20 June 2011.

**You Try!**
A. Insert an in-text citation into one of the sentences in your paragraph that has information from a secondary source.

B. Create a works-cited entry for the in-text citation at the end of the paragraph.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drafting</th>
<th>Session 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concept</strong></td>
<td><strong>Commentary</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Teaching Point** | *Writers provide commentary to explain to the reader how the evidence proves the claim.*

Commentary is typically the toughest concept for students to grasp in this unit because it requires them to analyze evidence. Some students are not developmentally ready to analyze, so the concept will need to be re-taught and practiced throughout the year. The more modeling and practice you can do with your students, the more likely they will be to grasp the concept.

At the end of this lesson, students should have all the components of their argument paragraph drafted with the exception of a topic sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggested Materials</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Commentary Anchor Chart <em>(see attached sheet)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Commentary Examples &amp; Practice handout <em>(see attached sheet)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Drafting Commentary Anchor Chart <em>(see attached sheet)</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review the handouts listed above and revise them to suit the needs and interests of the students in your classroom.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Active Engagement</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1. Defining Commentary**
  Full Class – Discussion |
  - Write the word “commentary” on the board.
  - Ask your students to identify the root of the word – “comment” and to explain/define what it means.
  - Next, have them hypothesize about what the commentary in an argument paragraph does and why it is needed. They will likely come up with the ideas in the formal definition below.
  - Share the definition of commentary below and have students record it in their writers’ notebooks.
    **Commentary** – sentences in an argument paragraph that explain what is important about the evidence and tell the reader how it proves and supports the claim.
  - Review the Commentary Anchor Chart.
    - To help students see how the word “because” can function in a sentence, have them practice writing sentences with the word “because.” Use sentence starters like:
      - _____________ is important because….
    - You may wish to pare down the list of commentary verbs to ones your students will be familiar with plus a couple new verbs.
  | **2. Examining Commentary Examples**
  Full Class |
  - On the Commentary Examples & Practice handout, review the claim together and each piece of factual evidence.
  - Have students read the commentary out loud.
  - On their own, have students underline the commentary verbs and circle instances of “because.”
  - Review as a class what students marked and ask:
    - How does this commentary show us how the evidence proves the claim?
  | **3. Practice Writing Commentary**
  Solo or Small Group |
  - Have students complete the You Try! Section of the Commentary Examples & Practice handout. Encourage them to return to the questions for writing commentary on the Commentary Anchor Chart.
  - Ideally, students would write 2-3 sentences. Have them work in pairs to share ideas.
  | **Share**
  Full Class |
  - Ask your students to reconvene and share their commentary sentences out loud or by recording their best sentence on the board or a sticky note that goes up on the board.
  - Formatively assess their understanding of commentary using the Mini-Task Rubric below. |
Independent Practice – Formative Assessment Mini-Task

**Drafting Commentary**
- Instruct students to revisit the commentary they wrote during the pre-writing phrase (session 4) and to highlight or underline any sentences they think could be useful for this draft of the paragraph to prove the debatable claim and explain evidence.
- Revisit the **Drafting Commentary Anchor Chart - Strong Commentary Verbs** list with students and encourage them to use these verbs as they write commentary for their evidence.
- Instruct students to free write answers for the **Drafting Commentary Anchor Chart - Three Commentary Questions** for each piece of evidence they have selected to support their argument.
- Circulate to assist students who have questions, to push individual student thinking further, and to read what students are writing.
- As you check in and/or conference with students, formatively assess their understanding of evidence and commentary using the rubric below.

**Mini-Task Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>On-Target</th>
<th>Novice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selection of evidence</td>
<td>- selected 2-3 strong pieces of evidence</td>
<td>- selected two good pieces of evidence</td>
<td>- selected one piece of evidence or weak pieces of evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commentary</td>
<td>- re-explains the evidence - tells why each piece of evidence is important - explains how the evidence supports the claim - fluidly and logically links pieces of evidence and commentary together</td>
<td>- re-explains the evidence - tells why each piece of evidence is important - explains how the evidence supports the claim</td>
<td>- does not reach the point of analysis by using “because” or another explanatory conjunction - provides more facts and details rather than commentary - reasons provided as commentary do not deepen reader’s understanding of the argument</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions for Writing Commentary – Ask Yourself:

- **What** do I need to make sure the reader understands about this evidence? (Re-explain the evidence.)
- **Why** is this evidence especially important?
- **How** does it prove and support the claim?

**The Importance of BECAUSE**

“Because” is a word that tells a reader they are about to hear an explanation. It signals **significance** and **relationship**. It’s an effective word to use when writing commentary. Take a look:

- These statistics are important **because** they **point** to the effects of poor nutrition and how serious the school lunch problem is.
- Leaders and decision-makers must pay attention to such experiences **because** they **prove** that there is a relationship between what we eat and how well we learn.

**Strong Commentary Verbs**

*from Rules for Writers by Diana Hacker*

Use these verbs when writing commentary. Note the two verbs underlined in the sentences above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>acknowledges</th>
<th>compares</th>
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<th>claims</th>
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<tr>
<td>adds</td>
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<td>underscores</td>
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<tr>
<td>admits</td>
<td>declares</td>
<td>observes</td>
<td>exemplifies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agrees</td>
<td>denies</td>
<td>points outs</td>
<td>implies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>argues</td>
<td>emphasizes</td>
<td>rejects</td>
<td>proves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asserts</td>
<td>highlights</td>
<td>reports</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Commentary Examples & Practice

**Debatable Claim:** My school lunch isn’t as healthy as it should be.

#1  
**Factual Evidence:** A single serving of chicken nuggets (5 pieces) can contain up to 500 milligrams of sodium, the total amount of salt children should consume daily. ([www.webmd.com](http://www.webmd.com))

**Commentary:** These numbers are important because they point to the effects of poor nutrition and how serious the school lunch problem is. Chicken nuggets, commonly served to students in school lunchrooms, exemplify the poor nutritional quality of school food. If children eat that much sodium on a regular basis, they are headed for a life of weight gain and high blood pressure.

#2  
**Anecdotal Evidence:** My friends and I always feel sluggish after lunch. Tanesha said, “I can hardly stay awake in art class after rushing through our 20 minute lunch.”

**Commentary:** Tanesha’s statement about feeling tired after inhaling her lunch confirms the negative effects that foods high in carbohydrates and sugar can have on young minds that need protein and vegetables, brain food, to be more lively and active class participants. If she ate more nutritious food at lunch, she might be more awake for art class. Leaders and decision-makers must pay attention to such experiences because they prove that there is a relationship between what we eat and how well we learn.

**You Try!**

**Debatable Claim:** School lunch isn’t as healthy as it should be.

**Factual Evidence:** “A study by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2006 found that 23.5 percent of high schools offered fast food from places like Pizza Hut and Taco Bell” ([The New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com)).

**Your Commentary:** *don’t forget to use those strong commentary verbs!*  
(re-explain the facts)

(tell what’s important about them)

(explain how this evidence proves and supports the claim)
Debatable Claim: My school lunch isn’t as healthy as it should be.

#1
Factual Evidence: A single serving of chicken nuggets (5 pieces) can contain up to 500 milligrams of sodium, the total amount of salt children should consume daily. (www.webmd.com)

Commentary: These numbers are important because they point to the effects of poor nutrition and how serious the school lunch problem is. Chicken nuggets, commonly served to students in school lunchrooms, exemplify the poor nutritional quality of school food. If children eat that much sodium on a regular basis, they are headed for a life of weight gain and high blood pressure.

#2
Anecdotal Evidence: My friends and I always feel sluggish after lunch. Taneisha said, “I can hardly stay awake in art class after rushing through our 20 minute lunch.”

Commentary: Taneisha’s statement about feeling tired after inhaling her lunch confirms the negative effects that foods high in carbohydrates and sugar can have on young minds that need protein and vegetables, brain food, to be more lively and active class participants. If she ate more nutritious food at lunch, she might be more awake for art class. Leaders and decision-makers must pay attention to such experiences because they prove that there is a relationship between what we eat and how well we learn.

You Try!
Debatable Claim: School lunch isn’t as healthy as it should be.

Factual Evidence: “A study by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2006 found that 23.5 percent of high schools offered fast food from places like Pizza Hut and Taco Bell” (The New York Times).

Your Commentary: don’t forget to use those strong commentary verbs! (re-explain the facts)

(tell what’s important about them)

(explain how this evidence proves and supports the claim)
Drafting Commentary Anchor Chart

**Strong Commentary Verbs**

*from Rules for Writers by Diana Hacker*

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<tr>
<td>asserts</td>
<td>highlights</td>
<td>reports</td>
<td>exhibits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>believes</td>
<td>illustrates</td>
<td>responds</td>
<td>suggests</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**3 Commentary Questions**

How would you re-explain this piece of evidence?

What is important about this piece of evidence?

How does this piece of evidence prove your claim?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Ways of Organizing an Argument Paragraph</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Teaching Point**

*There are many ways to structure an argument paragraph. Writers must decide how to arrange the commentary and evidence to best reflect the logic of their argument and most effectively persuade the reader to agree with the debatable claim.*

**Suggested Materials**

- Argument Organization Anchor Chart *(see attached sheet)*
- Understanding & Identifying Argument Paragraph Components handout *(see attached sheet)*
- Name That Paragraph Structure Activity *(see attached sheet)*

**Preparation**

- Review all the handouts listed above and revise as appropriate for your students.
- Understanding & Identifying Argument Paragraph Components handout
  - Review the teacher version of the handout.
  - Replace sample paragraph as desired. *(See the resources section for other sample argument paragraphs.)*

**Teaching Point**

*There are many ways to structure an argument paragraph. Writers must decide how to arrange the commentary and evidence to best reflect the logic of their argument and most effectively persuade the reader to agree with the debatable claim.*

***

If students begin to grasp the idea that writing structures are not fixed but are, instead, based on the logic of the argument and the purpose of the writing piece, they are much less likely to become dependent on the 5 paragraph essay structure down the road, a structure that stifles deep thinking and a writer’s creativity. Writers need to explore and experiment with structure so they see how ideas and evidence fit together. This lesson is a place for that experimentation.

This lesson continues to reinforce the concepts of claim, evidence, and commentary, while asking students to consider how to organize ideas.

**Active Engagement**

1. **Organizational Possibilities**
   **Full Class**
   - Share the teaching point with your students, as well as the Argument Organization Anchor Chart.

2. **Sample Argument Paragraphs**
   **Full Class – Understanding & Identifying Argument Paragraph Components**
   - Read the paragraph out loud as a class.
   - Use the questions on the handout to facilitate a discussion of the paragraph.
   - Consider having your students answer the questions on their own or in pairs first prior to this discussion so they come to the conversation with answers in mind.
   - The challenge questions will be the most difficult (abstract) for the students but are the most important for them to consider and will help them in the final activity of the lesson.

**Guided Practice**

- Pairs/Small Group – Name That Paragraph Structure!
  - Have the pairs/groups identify the organizational structure for each of the paragraphs they were given by identifying the evidence and commentary in the paragraph.
  - Circulate to assist groups.
  - Reconvene the class and ask groups to share their findings.

3. **Discuss discrepancies in findings to determine student thinking and to clarify ideas.**

**Independent Practice**

4. **Choosing a Structure**
   **Solo**
   - Have students experiment with the block and alternating formats for their own paragraphs. Encourage them to try both formats to determine which works best for the logic of the argument.
Argument Paragraph Organization Anchor Chart

BLOCK ORGANIZATION (note: either the evidence or the commentary can come first)

- Claim (Topic Sentence)
- Evidence
- Evidence
- Commentary
- Commentary

ALTERNATING ORGANIZATION (note: either the evidence or the commentary can come first)

- Claim (Topic Sentence)
- Evidence
- Commentary
- Evidence
- Commentary
Understanding & Identifying Argument Paragraph Components


The “fact” that junk food is cheaper than real food has become a way we explain why so many Americans are overweight, particularly those with lower incomes. This is just plain wrong. I frequently read confident statements like, “when a bag of chips is cheaper than a head of broccoli...” or “it’s more affordable to feed a family of four at McDonald’s than to cook a healthy meal for them at home.” In fact it isn’t cheaper to eat highly processed food: a typical order for a family of four — for example, two Big Macs, a cheeseburger, six chicken McNuggets, two medium and two small fries, and two medium and two small sodas — costs, at the McDonald’s a hundred steps from where I write, about $28. In general, despite extensive government subsidies, hyperprocessed* food remains more expensive than food cooked at home. You can serve a roasted chicken with vegetables along with a simple salad and milk for about $14, and feed four or even six people. If that’s too much money, substitute a meal of rice and canned beans with bacon, green peppers and onions; it’s easily enough for four people and costs about $9.

Hyperprocessed - extremely processed so that all the natural vitamins are sucked out of the food. Chicken McNuggets are an example. Chicken parts are chopped up and smushed together, then breaded and fried to form the nuggets.

1. Why did the writer put the word “fact” in quotations in the first sentence of the paragraph?

2. Summarize the paragraph’s debatable claim in your own words.

3. Is the argument persuasive? Were you persuaded to agree with the writer? Why or why not?

4. Does the writer provide enough evidence to prove the claim? (Underline the evidence.)
5. What other evidence would make this an even more persuasive paragraph?

6. Does the writer provide **commentary** that explains the evidence, why it’s important and how it proves the claim? (Put a star next to each commentary sentence.)

7. What method of **organization** does this paragraph use?

8. **Challenge:** explain why the paragraph is organized in this way. How does this organization support the argument?

9. **Challenge:** How else could the sentences have been arranged? How would this rearranging change or affect the argument?
Name That Paragraph Structure!

- Underline the key claim in the paragraph.
- Highlight the evidence in blue.
- Highlight the commentary in yellow.
- In the box next to each paragraph, put a “B” for block organization or an “A” for alternating organization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization A or B?</th>
<th>Argument Paragraph</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From the blog of Karen Le Billon, author of <em>French Kids Eat Everything</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learning doesn’t stop in the lunchroom, in my opinion. If we are giving our children a short lunch break, we are teaching them that food is an inconvenience, and eating is an interruption in the day. We encourage them to gobble their food, when the research shows that eating more slowly is healthier. In fact, the French spend longer eating, but eat less—in part because that ‘fullness feeling’ (satiety signal) needs about 20 minutes to get from your stomach to your brain. But the French also spend longer eating because they believe that it’s important to teach kids to eat well – it’s a life skill, like reading.

| from “Our Schools’ Sweet Tooth,” by Emily Ventura and Michael Goran |
| *The Los Angeles Times* March 2, 2011 |

A few straightforward changes to the [school lunch] menus would lead to considerable reductions in sugar intake. Removing the chocolate milk from breakfast and lunch could mean a reduction of 4 teaspoons per day per child, which adds up to nearly a gallon of sugar per child over the course of the school year. However, politics related to federal funding make such seemingly simple changes more difficult. If the district took away chocolate milk and kids decided not to drink the plain milk, it could lead to reduced funding from the USDA. For the district to receive federal reimbursement for meals, students may not decline more than one item at breakfast or more than two items at lunch. Though technically students may skip the milk altogether and the district would still be reimbursed, chocolate milk is one of the most popular items and helps to ensure student participation — and hence funding.
Name That Paragraph Structure!
Teacher Version

- Underline the key claim in the paragraph.
- Highlight the evidence in blue.
- Highlight the commentary in yellow.
- In the box next to each paragraph, put a “B” for block organization or an “A” for alternating organization.

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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>from “Our Schools’ Sweet Tooth,” by Emily Ventura and Michael Goran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Los Angeles Times</em> March 2, 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>
### Concept
**Transitions**

**Teaching Point**
*Transition words and phrases define relationships between ideas. In an argument paragraph, they show the reader how the commentary and the evidence are connected.*

### Suggested Materials
- Transition Words & Phrases Anchor Chart *(see attached sheet)*
- Identify the Transition handout *(see attached sheet)*
- Transition Madlibs *(see attached sheet)*
- Organize the Paragraph Parts and Improve Flow Activity *(see attached sheet)*

### Preparation
- Review the handouts listed above and revise to suit the needs, interests, and abilities of the students in your classroom.
- For gifted students or an additional challenge for your students, remove the transition type under each blank on the Transition Madlibs handout.
- Organize the Paragraph Parts and Improve Flow Activity
  - Revise as needed for your students’ skill level and interests.
  - Reproduce this handout and cut it into strips and mix them up, then paperclip the sentences together.

### Active Engagement

#### 1. Transitions: Purpose and Type

**Full Class – What are transitions?**
- Ask students how they would define the word “transition.” Gather the answers on the board.
- Discuss times when students have made transitions from one stage or place to another.
  - Between grades
  - When moving
- Ask what students had to do in order to transition—what did that involve?
- Ask students how a transition might be used in writing.
- Introduce the teaching point.
- Share the Transition Words & Phrases Anchor Chart.
- Review the purposes of transitions and the different transition types.
- To illustrate the concept of the transition as an idea bridge, share the following sentences:

  I won’t be going to the mall with my friends **since** I didn’t finish homework.

  Kwan doesn’t eat vegetables, **in particular** green vegetables like broccoli and lettuce.

  - Ask students to identify the type of transition used in each sentence by looking at the Transition Anchor Chart.
  - Discuss with students how the transitions bridge the information at the beginnings of the sentences to the ends of the sentences.
    - Ask: What kind of idea does the transition tell the reader to get ready for?

### Guided Practice

#### 2. Identify the Transition Activity

**Solo or Pairs**
- Have students complete the Identify the Transition handout.
- Review responses as a class and spend time discussing possible alternate transitions (the fourth column of the table in the handout).

#### 3. Transition Madlibs Activity

**Small Group or Full-Class**
- For additional practice, have students complete the Transitions Madlibs Activity. This can be a lively exercise to complete as a class or have students complete in small groups.

#### 4. Organize the Paragraph Parts & Improve Flow Activity

**Small Group**
- Give each group of students a set of sentences to organize.
- Instruct them to spread the sentences out on a desk or the floor and experiment with what they think is the best organizational structure, given the main claim.
- Have students insert additional transitional words and phrases between the sentences to make the flow of the argument and logic more clear. This will help them consider and reconsider their chosen organization.
Full Class

- Ask each group to share the **Organize the Paragraph Parts & Improve Flow Activity** by recording their sentence order on the board (using the numbers assigned to each sentence).
- As a class, analyze the similarities and differences between responses. Note that there are many possibilities for how to organize the paragraph and that the transitional words and phrases can be key in making an organizational structure work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Practice – Formative Assessment Mini-Task</th>
<th>Revised Paragraph with Transitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Have students insert transitions between and within sentences of their own argument paragraph draft.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formatively assess students’ use of transitions to determine their ability to connect ideas and sentences using the proper type of transition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mini-Task Rubric – Sample Revised Paragraph with Transitions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>On-Target</th>
<th>Novice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transition selection</td>
<td>-Uses multiple transition types</td>
<td>-Uses a few different transition types</td>
<td>-Uses only one transition type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition placement</td>
<td>-Places transitions at all needed and desirable moments in the paragraph</td>
<td>-Places transitions at some needed and desirable moments in the paragraph</td>
<td>-Places transitions at only one or two moments in the paragraph; some placement is incorrect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transition Words & Phrases
Anchor Chart

What are transitions and what do they do?
- They are words and phrases that form *idea bridges* for the reader to let them know how the information they just read is related to the information they are about to read.
- Transitions show the reader how your ideas fit together so they are more likely to be persuaded by your argument.

Where are they located?
Transitions are located within sentences, between sentences, and between paragraphs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To prove</th>
<th>Because, since, for the same reason, obviously, furthermore, in fact, in addition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To provide an example</td>
<td>for example, for instance, in other words, namely, specifically, to illustrate, to demonstrate, in particular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To show result</td>
<td>accordingly, as a result, consequently, so, thereby, therefore, thus, finally,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To add more information</td>
<td>also, and, as well, besides, equally important, finally, furthermore, in addition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To show cause</td>
<td>as, because, for, since, due to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To show sequence</td>
<td>first, (second, third, fourth, fifth), next, following this, subsequently, consequently, finally, therefore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To show time</td>
<td>afterward, before, currently, eventually, finally, immediately, in the future, in the past, later, meanwhile, next, often, sometimes, soon, subsequently, then, today, when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To summarize ideas</td>
<td>finally, in conclusion, in short, in summary, to sum up, therefore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To compare ideas</td>
<td>in the same way, likewise, similarly, similar to, also, again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To contrast ideas</td>
<td>at the same time, but, conversely, even so, even though, however, in contrast, nevertheless, nonetheless, on the one hand, on the other hand, still, yet, in comparison, in contrast, on the contrary, as opposed to, despite, unlike, although, conversely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identify the Transition

- Circle or highlight all the transitions in the paragraph below.
- Underneath the paragraph, record the transitions and indicate what type each one is.
- Next, in the column titled “new transition,” replace each transition with another transition that could also do the same work.

The Benefits of Chocolate

People should feel free to eat chocolate on a regular basis, despite concerns about obesity in America, because consuming chocolate in moderation can have positive health effects. For example, it is a food that improves one’s mood. Specifically, many people report experiencing a feeling of pleasure during and after eating chocolate. In addition, eating chocolate, especially dark chocolate, has been proven to be good for the heart because it acts as an anti-oxidant, meaning that it frees the body of toxins. However, it’s important to pay attention to how much chocolate you consume. Eating large amounts will counteract the positive antioxidant effects this candy can have. Eating an entire bag of Hershey kisses in a single day, for instance, will only cause weight gain. Therefore, the next time you reach for a chocolate bar, you can feel good about it, as long as you don’t eat the whole thing!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Transition</th>
<th>Type of Transition</th>
<th>New Transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Benefits of Chocolate

People should feel free to eat chocolate on a regular basis, despite concerns about obesity in America, because consuming chocolate in moderation can have positive health effects. For example, it is a food that improves one’s mood. Specifically, many people report experiencing a feeling of pleasure during and after eating chocolate. In addition, eating chocolate, especially dark chocolate, has been proven to be good for the heart because it acts as an anti-oxidant, meaning that it frees the body of toxins. However, it’s important to pay attention to how much chocolate you consume. Eating large amounts will counteract the positive antioxidant effects this candy can have. Eating an entire bag of Hershey kisses in a single day, for instance, will only cause weight gain. Therefore, the next time you reach for a chocolate bar, you can feel good about it, as long as you don’t eat the whole thing!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Transition</th>
<th>Type of Transition</th>
<th>New Transition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>despite</td>
<td>To contrast ideas</td>
<td>even though there are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>because</td>
<td>To show cause</td>
<td>since</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>For example</td>
<td>To provide an example</td>
<td>In particular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Specifically</td>
<td>To provide an example</td>
<td>To illustrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>In addition</td>
<td>To prove</td>
<td>Furthermore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>However</td>
<td>To contrast ideas</td>
<td>At the same time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>for instance</td>
<td>To provide an example</td>
<td>for example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Therefore</td>
<td>To summarize</td>
<td>Thus, So, In conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Transition Madlibs

Directions
• Insert the best transition for the sentence in each blank.
• For a hint about the kind of transition to choose, pay careful attention to the transition type indicated after each blank.
• Do not repeat any transitions in the paragraph.

The Dangers of Drinking Soda

Who doesn’t enjoy the bubbly, sugary taste of Coke or Sprite on a hot summer day? ________ (to contrast ideas) drinking soda regularly can have harmful effects on your body. Doctors and experts refer to soda as “liquid candy” ________ (to prove) it is so sweet and high in calories. ________, (to show result) this sugary liquid can cause cavities and enamel erosion, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics (webmd.com). ________ (to prove) some studies have linked regular soda consumption to an increased risk of childhood obesity (everydayhealth.com). ________, (to contrast ideas) Maureen Storey, Associate Director of the Georgetown Center, says: "Portion sizes have expanded dramatically and it is simply wrong to blame increases in obesity on food or beverages that contain carbohydrates" (abc.com). ________, (to contrast ideas) soda does suppress the appetite, making eating healthy foods, ________ (to provide an example) fruits and vegetables, less appealing. ________, (to prove or add more information) researchers have discovered that the more caffeinated soda kids drink, the less sleep they get, which can affect school work and sports participation (msnbc.com). If you must drink soda, ________ (to show result), drink it in moderation and try to cut back to only one or two cans per week.
Organize the Paragraph Parts & Improve Flow

Directions:
• These sentences are in the wrong order. Organize them so they form the most persuasive argument.
• Insert additional transitional words and phrases to improve the paragraph’s flow and logic.

Make Pizza a Healthier Vegetable

1. And making the crust with whole grain rather than white flour is a perfect way to introduce more whole grains into children’s diets.

2. The new nutrition standards for school lunch call for more whole grains and produce, as well as less sodium and fat (HuffingtonPost.com).

3. According to the nutrition standards for school lunch, the tomato paste on pizza qualifies it as a vegetable (New York Times).

4. But how much nutrients does tomato paste really have? While it does contain some vitamin A, C, and D, as well as iron, it’s packed with sodium (nutrientfacts.com).

5. According to a study by the University of Minnesota, students don’t mind and will actually eat whole grain pizza crust, since it’s disguised by the sauce, cheese, and toppings (Institute of Medicine).

6. So let’s keep pizza on the school lunch menu and boost its nutritional content. It’s easy to make pizza with nutritious and delicious ingredients. Our students deserve that and much more.

7. Pizza served at school could and should be healthier.

8. This Italian food can be made with low-fat cheese, vegetable toppings, and whole grain crust to provide kids with a desirable choice that supplies maximum nutrition.

9. Veggie pizza should be served to give students an additional serving of daily vegetables.

10. So cafeterias should make their pizza a better representative of the “vegetable” the standards label it as.

11. Schools can and should do better for their students, who are growing and need to fuel their bodies each day so they can learn during class time.
Organize the Paragraph Parts & Improve Flow
Teacher Version

Directions:
• Organize the sentences below in the order that makes the most sense and forms the most persuasive argument.
• Insert additional transitional words and phrases to improve the paragraph’s flow and logic.

Make Pizza a Healthier Vegetable

Sentence Order: 7, 3, 4, 11, 2, 10, 8, 9, 1, 5, 6

Pizza served at school could and should be healthier. According to the nutrition standards for school lunch, the tomato paste on pizza qualifies it as a vegetable (New York Times). But how much nutrients does tomato paste really have? While it does contain some vitamin A, C, and D, as well as iron, it’s packed with sodium (nutrientfacts.com). Schools can and should do better for their students who are growing and need to fuel their bodies each day so they can learn during class time. The new nutrition standards for school lunch call for more whole grains and produce, as well as less sodium and fat (HuffingtonPost.com). So cafeterias should make their pizza a better representative of the “vegetable” the standards label it as. This Italian food can be made with low-fat cheese, vegetable toppings, and whole grain crust to provide kids with a desirable choice that supplies maximum nutrition. Veggie pizza should be served to give students an additional serving of daily vegetables. And making the crust with whole grain rather than white flour is a perfect way to introduce more whole grains into children’s diets. According to a study by the University of Minnesota, students don’t mind and will actually eat whole grain pizza crust, since it’s disguised by the sauce, cheese, and toppings (InstituteofMedicine.edu). So let’s keep pizza on the school lunch menu and boost its nutritional content. It’s easy to make pizza with nutritious and delicious ingredients. Our students deserve that and much more.
<table>
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<th>Drafting</th>
<th>Session 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concept</strong></td>
<td><strong>Topic Sentences</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Teaching Point** | a. A topic sentence begins a paragraph and is a promise to the reader about what to expect in the paragraph.  
b. When crafting argument paragraphs, writers include the claim and a summary of evidence in the topic sentence. |
| **Suggested Materials** | • Argument Paragraph Topic Sentences Anchor Chart *see attached sheet*  
• Practice with Topic Sentences handout *see attached sheet* |
| **Preparation** | Review the handout listed above and revise it as needed to reflect the skill level and interests of your students. |
| **Teaching Point** | a. A topic sentence begins a paragraph and is a promise to the reader about what to expect in the paragraph. |
| **Active Engagement** | 1. **The Purpose of a Topic Sentence**  
**Full Class**  
• Prior Knowledge - Ask students what they know about topic sentences, and record on the board.  
• Introduce the teaching point. |
| **Teaching Point** | b. When crafting argument paragraphs, writers include the claim and a summary of evidence in the topic sentence. |
| **Guided Practice** | 2. **Key Components of an Argument Paragraph’s Topic Sentence**  
**Full Class**  
• Review the Argument Paragraph Topic Sentence Anchor Chart with the class.  
3. **Practice with Topic Sentences**  
**Small Group**  
• Have students dissect the parts of the sample topic sentences, then review the outcomes as a full class.  
**Solo**  
• Ask students to write two different versions of their topic sentence (using writing from session 7). The claim will remain the same, but the summary of evidence should be worded differently in each sentence and might emphasize different aspects of the evidence or be structured differently. |
| **Share** | **Full Class**  
• On the board or a large piece of butcher paper, have students record their topic sentences.  
• Ask them to put parentheses around the claim and brackets around the summary of evidence.  
• This sharing will allow students to check to make sure they have both components in their sentences and for you to assess their understanding of topic sentences. |
**What is a summary?** A brief statement that distills a large amount of information down to its most important parts.

**What should you include in your summary of evidence?** The main idea of your evidence.

**Sample Argument Paragraph Topic Sentence**

People should not eat fast food because it causes health problems.

**SENTENCE DISSECTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Debatable Claim</strong></th>
<th><strong>Summary of Evidence</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People should not eat fast food</td>
<td>because it causes health problems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conjunctions**

Use words like *because* and *since* to join the claim with the summary of evidence.
Practice with Topic Sentences

Dissect These Sample Topic Sentences

Directions:

- Circle the debatable claim.
- Underline the summary of evidence.

1. Chocolate milk should not be served in school lunches because of its high sugar content.

2. My school lunch isn’t as healthy as it should be since it leaves me feeling sick and tired after I eat it.

3. People should feel free to eat chocolate on a regular basis, despite concerns about obesity in America, because consuming chocolate in moderation can have positive health effects.

You Try!

1. Now, return to your argument paragraph and summarize your evidence.

2. Add your claim to this summary of evidence using a conjunction such as “because” or “since.” And that’s a topic sentence!

You Try Again!

Rewrite your topic sentence so the summary of evidence is worded differently. And try a different conjunction.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revising and Editing</th>
<th>Session 9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concept</td>
<td>Revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Point</strong></td>
<td>Writers revise throughout the drafting process. When argument writers have completed a draft, they revisit all the components of the piece to make sure it is as persuasive as possible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Suggested Materials** | • Argument Paragraph Rubric *(see attached sheet)*  
• Argument Paragraph Revision handout *(see attached sheet)*  |
| **Preparation**      | • Review the rubric.  
• Review the handout listed above and revise it to reflect the key concerns your feel students should address in their paragraph revisions. |
| **Active Engagement**| **1. Rubric Review**  
Small Group/ Full Class  
• Review the major components of the Argument Paragraph Rubric (content, organization, style and mechanics).  
• Assign each small group a single on-target rubric component to paraphrase.  
• Reconvene the class and have each small group report back with their paraphrase of the on-target rubric component to ensure that students are clear of the writing expectations.  
**2. Revision**  
Solo  
• Have students complete a revision of their argument paragraphs using the Argument Paragraph Revision handout. (Their argument paragraphs will consist of their writing from sessions 7 and 8.)  |
| **Share**            | As time allows, have students pair up and explain to their partner the revision work they have done and still need to do. |
# Argument Paragraph Rubric – Prove Your Point

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>On-Target</th>
<th>Novice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
<td>The paragraph:</td>
<td></td>
<td>The paragraph:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Creates a unified and persuasive argument; every sentence supports the</td>
<td>• Creates a fairly unified and persuasive argument; almost all sentences</td>
<td>• Struggles to create a unified and persuasive argument; multiple sentences do not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>key claim.</td>
<td>support the key claim.</td>
<td>directly support the key claim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contains a topic sentence with a debatable claim and summary of the</td>
<td>• Contains a topic sentence with a debatable claim and summary of the</td>
<td>• Contains a topic sentence with either a debatable claim or summary of the evidence, but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>evidence.</td>
<td>evidence.</td>
<td>not both.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Employs multiple evidence types, including a secondary source.</td>
<td>• Employs a variety of evidence types, including a secondary source.</td>
<td>• Employs only one evidence type.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• All sources are credible and properly cited.</td>
<td>• Most sources are credible and properly cited.</td>
<td>• Sources are not credible; citations are missing or incorrect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Includes commentary that intricately and complexly explains how the</td>
<td>• Includes commentary that explains how the evidence proves the claim.</td>
<td>• Commentary missing or does not fully explain how the evidence proves the claim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>evidence proves the claim.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>The paragraph:</td>
<td></td>
<td>The paragraph:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shifts seamlessly back and forth between evidence and commentary.</td>
<td>• Logically flows between evidence and commentary.</td>
<td>• Struggles to organize evidence and commentary in a logical manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Style &amp; Mechanics</strong></td>
<td>The paragraph:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Contains no fragments or run-ons; engages complex sentence structures.</td>
<td>• Contains minimal fragments or run-ons.</td>
<td>The paragraph:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Consistently maintains a formal voice.</td>
<td>• Maintains a formal voice throughout with only occasional lapses.</td>
<td>• Contains multiple fragments or run-ons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Readily employs diction specific to the chosen topic.</td>
<td>• Employs diction specific to the chosen topic.</td>
<td>• Is written in an informal voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Occasionally employs diction specific to the chosen topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Process Checklist</strong></td>
<td>The writer:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ Pre-wrote to discover ideas for a debatable claim.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ Drafted to organize and analyze evidence and devise commentary.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ Revised his/her draft to achieve greater coherency and clarity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>○ Edited for sentence-level clarity and an error-free essay.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Argument Paragraph Revision

CONTENT

Topic Sentence
- Underline your claim. Make sure it’s debatable (not a fact—it should be a statement that can be argued about)
  - Does your claim reflect what you’re actually arguing for in your paragraph?

- Re-read the summary of evidence.
  - Does it refer to all the evidence you discuss?
  - Is it worded clearly and in an interesting fashion?

Evidence
- Ask yourself: Is this the best evidence to use to prove your argument?
- Is there a variety of evidence—both factual and anecdotal?
- Did you cite all your factual evidence correctly?

Commentary
- Did you explain each piece of evidence?
- Did you tell the reader how this evidence proves your claim?
- Did you explain why your claim is so important?

ORGANIZATION

Structure and Flow of Argument
- Ask yourself—is this the best order for my evidence and commentary?
- Experiment with re-organizing your evidence and commentary. What does this do to the flow and logic of your argument? Does it make more sense now?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revising and Editing</th>
<th>Session 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concept</td>
<td>Editing and Reflection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Teaching Point       | a. Writers closely edit their pieces to make sure they don’t have any sentence fragments or run-ons, which make it difficult for the reader to understand the argument.  
b. When a draft is revised and complete, writers reflect on the final product and process to determine what they will do differently the next time they take on a writing task. |
| Preparation          | • Devise an activity to teach or review sentence fragments and run-ons. |
| Suggested Materials  | • Post Revision-Reflection Anchor Chart *(see attached sheet)* |
| Assessment           | Students’ final paragraphs will serve as the post-unit assessment. |
| Notes on Publication | Publication Options  
• Create a website or wiki about the subject your students are arguing for and share the link with parents, other students, and other schools, and interested parties.  
• Post the paragraphs on a class blog and have other students/teachers comment on them via #Comments4kids (Twitter hashtag). |
Post-Revision Reflection
Anchor Chart

In your Writer’s Notebook, reflect on these questions:

1. What was the most exciting part of writing your argument paragraph? How come?
2. What was the most difficult part of writing your argument paragraph? How come?
3. If you still had more time to revise your piece, what would you work on/change?
4. What did you learn about yourself and your process as a writer?
5. What will you do differently the next time you tackle a writing project?
Resources

Teaching Argument – Pedagogical and Theoretical Resources

Common Core State Standards Appendix A
http://www.corestandards.org/the-standards

A Curricular Plan for the Writing Workshop – Grade 6 by Lucy Calkins (Unit 4 – personal and persuasive essays)

Nonfiction Matters: Reading, Writing, and Research in Grades 3-8 by Stephanie Harvey
http://www.amazon.com/Nonfiction-Matters-Reading-Writing-Research/dp/1571100725/ref=lr_432_1

Everything’s an Argument by Lunsford and Ruszkiewicz

They Say, I Say: The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein

Teaching Argument Writing, Grades 6-12: Supporting Claims with Relevant Evidence and Clear Reasoning by George Hillocks, Jr.

Essays and Arguments website by Prof. Ian Johnston of Vancouver Island University - http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/arguments/argument8.htm

Internet Resources for Argument Components

Google Search Literacy Lesson Plans – Effective Searching, Selecting Evidence, Evaluating Sources
http://www.google.com/insidesearch/searcheducation/lessons.html

Scholastic website on persuasive writing – online exercises for selecting the evidence that fits the claim and using the correct transition

Resources for Finding Mentor Texts

Bibliography of non-fiction books, articles, and videos on high interest topics from the Columbia Teacher’s College Reading and Writing Project

Calliope – world history for kids (ages 9-14)
**Cobblestone** – American History for kids (ages 9-14)
http://www.cobblestonepub.com/resources_cob_tgs.html

**Discover** – articles on science, technology and the future
http://discovermagazine.com/

**Muse** – past and present, history, science and the arts (ages 9-14)

**National Geographic** – cultural, scientific, geographic, anthropological, and historical investigations of past and present events.
http://www.nationalgeographic.com/

**National Geographic Explorer for Kids** (Pathfinder edition for grades 4-6)
http://magma.nationalgeographic.com/ngexplorer/

**Odyssey** – science for kids (ages 9-14)
http://www.odysseymagazine.com/

**Smithsonian Magazine**
http://www.smithsonianmag.com/

**Time for Kids**
http://www.timeforkids.com/

PBS Video– Watch award-winning documentaries, including current episodes from Nova and Nature, as well as archived videos
http://video.pbs.org/

History.com– Video clips and full length shows on history topics from Ancient China to the Vikings to Watergate.
http://www.history.com
Sample Argument Paragraphs

Excerpt from *Fast Food Nation* by Eric Schlosser

McDonald's began switching to frozen french fries in 1966 -- and few customers noticed the difference. Nevertheless, the change had a profound effect on the nation's agriculture and diet. A familiar food had been transformed into a highly processed industrial commodity. McDonald's fries now come from huge manufacturing plants that can peel, slice, cook, and freeze two million pounds of potatoes a day. The rapid expansion of McDonald's and the popularity of its low-cost, mass-produced fries changed the way Americans eat. In 1960 Americans consumed an average of about eighty-one pounds of fresh potatoes and four pounds of frozen french fries. In 2000 they consumed an average of about fifty pounds of fresh potatoes and thirty pounds of frozen fries. Today McDonald's is the largest buyer of potatoes in the United States.

*commodity- a useful or valuable thing

Excerpt from *Kitchen Confidential* by Anthony Bourdain

My first indication that food was something other than a substance one stuffed in one's face when hungry — like filling up at a gas station — came after fourth grade in elementary school. It was on a family vacation to Europe, on the Queen Mary, in the cabin-class dining room. There's a picture somewhere: my mother in her Jackie O sunglasses, my younger brother and I in our painfully cute cruise wear, boarding the big Cunard ocean liner, all of us excited about our first transatlantic voyage, our first trip to my father's ancestral homeland, France.

It was the soup.

It was cold.

This was something of a discovery for a curious fourth-grader whose entire experience of soup to this point had consisted of Campbell's cream of tomato and chicken noodle. I'd eaten in restaurants before, sure, but this was the first food I really noticed. It was the first food I enjoyed and, more important, remembered enjoying. I asked our patient British waiter what this delightfully cool, tasty liquid was.
“Vichyssoise,” came the reply, a word that to this day — even though it's now a tired old warhorse of a menu selection and one I've prepared thousands of times — still has a magical ring to it. I remember everything about the experience: the way our waiter ladled it from a silver tureen into my bowl; the crunch of tiny chopped chives he spooned on as garnish; the rich, creamy taste of leek and potato; the pleasurable shock, the surprise that it was cold.

Underline – claim
Blue - evidence
Yellow – commentary

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Excerpt from Fast Food Nation by Eric Schlosser

Chicken McNuggets were introduced nationwide in 1983. Within one month of their launch, the McDonald's Corporation had become the second-largest purchaser of chicken in the United States, surpassed only by KFC. McNuggets tasted good, they were easy to chew, and they appeared to be healthier than other items on the menu at McDonald's. After all, they were made out of chicken. But their health benefits were illusory*. A chemical analysis of McNuggets by a researcher at Harvard Medical School found that their "fatty acid profile" more closely resembled beef than poultry. They were cooked in beef tallow, like McDonald's fries. The chain soon switched to vegetable oil, adding "beef extract" to McNuggets during the manufacturing process in order to retain their familiar taste. Today Chicken McNuggets are wildly popular among young children-and contain twice as much fat per ounce as a hamburger.

*illusory – not real, based on illusion

Underline – claim

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From the blog of Karen Le Billon, author of French Kids Eat Everything

Learning doesn’t stop in the lunchroom, in my opinion. If we are giving our children a short lunch break, we are teaching them that food is an inconvenience, and eating is an interruption in the day. We encourage them to gobble their food, when the research shows that eating more slowly is healthier. In fact, the French spend longer eating, but eat less—in part because that ‘fullness feeling’ (satiety signal) needs about 20 minutes to get from your stomach to your brain. But the French also spend longer eating because they believe that it’s important to teach kids to eat well – it’s a life skill, like reading.

Excerpt from “Sixth Graders: Give Us Time to Eat at School” by Talia Bradley and Antonia Ritter
http://www.startribune.com/opinion/commentaries/147833575.html

Lunch is an important social time. Teachers always tell us to socialize at lunch and recess, not in the classroom. But we cannot do that if we are scarfing down our lunches in 11 minutes. And at recess nobody can socialize or run around if they are hungry or we feel sick. Lots of kids stay in classrooms during lunch so they have time to actually eat and socialize. Pretty soon nobody will be going to the lunchroom or recess. We don’t have time to eat there; by staying in our teachers’ classrooms, we do.
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Excerpt from Our Schools’ Sweet Tooth,” an op-ed in the Los Angeles Times by Emily Ventura and Michael Goran


A few straightforward changes to the [school lunch] menus would lead to considerable reductions in sugar intake. Removing the chocolate milk from breakfast and lunch could mean a reduction of 4 teaspoons per day per child, which adds up to nearly a gallon of sugar per child over the course of the school year. However, politics related to federal funding make such seemingly simple changes more difficult. If the district took away chocolate milk and kids decided not to drink the plain milk, it could lead to reduced funding from the USDA. For the district to receive federal reimbursement for meals, students may not decline more than one item at breakfast or more than two items at lunch. Though technically students may skip the milk altogether and the district would still be reimbursed, chocolate milk is one of the most popular items and helps to ensure student participation — and hence funding.

from “Getting Real About the High Price of Cheap Food” by Bryan Walsh

Time Magazine August 21, 2009

With the exhaustion of the soil, the impact of global warming and the inevitably* rising price of oil — which will affect everything from fertilizer to supermarket electricity bills — our industrial* style of food production will end sooner or later. As the developing world grows richer, hundreds of millions of people will want to shift to the same calorie-heavy, protein-rich diet that has made Americans so unhealthy — demand for meat and
poultry worldwide is set to rise 25% by 2015 — but the earth can no longer deliver. Unless Americans radically rethink the way they grow and consume food, they face a future of eroded farmland, hollowed-out countryside, scarier germs, higher health costs — and bland taste. Sustainable food has an elitist* reputation, but each of us depends on the soil, animals and plants — and as every farmer knows, if you don't take care of your land, it can't take care of you.

Inevitably – impossible to avoid or prevent
Industrial- manufactured, processed
Elitist- believing you are superior to others due to intelligence, social status, or wealth

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