

CREATING A CULTURE OF ARGUMENT

(That's a good thing.)

WHAT:

i3 Program Goal: Routinely Teach Argument Writing
Students read and write arguments *daily*

WHY:

i3 Big Picture Goals

Students as future citizens

Thoughtful citizens read, criticize, analyze, and create arguments daily--- reading the paper, watching the news, surfing the internet, talking among friends, family, and co-workers. These small moments in everyday life make up a strong democracy.

Students as learners

Researching and writing arguments improve student learning beyond specific skills in writing. Students learn content knowledge, broaden their ideas, and stretch their mental capacities. Skills in argument writing improve learning in all subject areas.

HOW:

Making It Possible

The notion of finding time to include daily argument writing in an already packed curriculum seems overwhelming and perhaps impossible. And it is – if we think that this argument writing is separate from what we want writers to do in our classroom, if we think of this writing as discrete activities unattached to the work we are doing as readers and writers, and if the writing is only five minutes at the start of every bell.

But what if we open the possibilities? What if daily argument writing leveraged the writing our students are already doing, capitalized on the habits of readers and writers and connected to the big picture of who our writers are? What if this daily writing was recursive and returned to work already being done or generative and acted as seeds for work to come, built on skills and habits? Maybe, with that in mind, we could create a culture of argument – and that is a good thing.

HOW:

Categories of Thinking And Planning For Creating A Culture Of Argument Through Daily or Frequent Argument Writing with Nonfiction:

- **Arguments In Students' Lives:** Help students recognize that they are already surrounded by arguments in their own lives so they begin to see themselves as argument makers. One way this might look is to leverage the kinds of generative writing you might have students already do in their writing notebooks. For example, you might already have students create writing topic lists or write their schedule of the day or create a list of "I Believe" statements or even respond to prompts in their notebooks. Each one of these, and many more, can become argument topics. Then with a little bit of writing time, students are writing a lot of seed arguments and practicing claims and reasons. The goal is to help students notice that they already live in a world of argument.
- See Session One and the beginning of Session Two of the Mini-OLE for an example of how this might look.

- **Arguments In The World:** Surround students with the arguments in the world so they begin to notice that they already live in and participate in many arguments throughout their day. Even more important, they begin to notice that they have a response to them. One way this might look is by exposing students to the arguments that surround them in newspaper headlines, advertisements, PSA's, songs, twitter feeds, and even cups from fast food restaurants. With all of these, students can notice what argument is being made, how it is being made and then, with a little bit of writing, they are taking part in the arguments with their own response. This practice is leveraging the idea that writers notice arguments and respond to them.
- See Session One of the Mini-OLE for an example of how this might look.

- **Oral Arguments:** Capitalize on time and the idea of oral composing as practice for writing by having students practice making arguments through mini-speeches. These speeches take little time and help students internalize the elements of argument such as a claim, a focused topic, reasons and evidence. Quick argument speeches can cover a range of topics from the usefulness of a spirit assembly to a response to a short written debate. Even better, they can help students practice text support and internal text structures or help students practice engaging introductions or useful conclusions.

- **Arguments in Response To A Single Text:** Move students into longer arguments in the world by using short (1-2 page) articles. With these articles, students practice reading strategies and habits of reading argument by noticing claims, reasons, evidence, counter-claims, and structure. Then with a bit of writing, they begin to practice the habits of writers as they find lines and ideas worth responding to and respond with support from or reference to the text. Reading and responding to a single text could happen in one day or stretch across a week and could simply live in a writer's notebook until it is time to choose one and revise for publication.
- See Session One in the Mini-OLE for an example of how this might look.
- See Article of the Week and text resources below to find sites for nonfiction articles.

- **Arguments in Response To a Text Pair or Text Trio:** Introduce students to multiple perspectives in authentic arguments by stretching a pair or trio of texts (videos, infographics, articles) centered on the same topic across a week or multiple days. This daily argument writing helps students practice the hard skills of noticing various perspectives, beyond pro and con, and juggling more than one source in writing. One way this process might look is through Layering. Each day, students read a new piece of text in the series and add to their reading and writing with information they gather each day. This writing has multiple uses as students can practice creating claims, using source material, choosing appropriate internal text structures, synthesizing information, and as they write they are making lots of decisions about organization, source material, and even revision.
- See Session Two and Session Three of the mini-OLE for an example of how this might look.
- See the Layering handout on the mini-OLE link.
- Use text resources below to find example articles.

- **Doing the Work of Argument:** Daily argument writing might also include work that is related to the writing work we are already doing in the class. For example, if we are in the middle of a mini-unit that focuses on a series of articles or asks students to generate a specific genre of argument like a review or an op-ed, then the work students are already doing in writing is daily argument. The teaching you do in these units, noticing how an argument is built, reading for claims and evidence, gathering information, making claims, choosing an organization, revising, publishing are all examples of the work of argument writing.
- See the Mini-Units as examples of units of argument writing.

- **Practicing Argument Moves:** Even if students aren't reading, writing or creating arguments, we can have them practicing the moves we want students to make as writers of argument. For example, if we want students to work with sources and expand on the words of others, we can have students expand a specific part of a text in multiple ways, or if we want students to think about organization, we can have students notice how an argument is built and then create a list of possible organizations in their notebooks. The same is true of any argument skill we want them to practice: making a counter-claim, trying out different types of evidence for the same claim or reason, using sentence frames to create internal text structure ... anything.

RESOURCES:

List of argument prompts with related articles:

http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/02/04/200-prompts-for-argumentative-writing/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0

Sites For Non-Fiction Articles:

New York Times – Learning Network (Student Opinion Pages)

<http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/>

The WEEK:

<http://theweek.com/>

Newsela:

<https://www.newsela.com/>

Tween Tribune:

<http://tweentribune.com/>

Kelly Gallagher: Article of the Week

<http://kellygallagher.org/resources/articles.html>

<http://www.teachingthecore.com/resources/article-of-the-week-aow/>