

Writing an Argument Part 1: Introduction

Goals:

- Participants will be able to define argument writing.
- Participants will identify characteristics of an argument.
- Participants will be able to distinguish between argument writing and persuasive writing.

Session Preparation:

- During this session, participants will view a video vignette from the Hunt Institute series on the Common Core State Standards. This video can be accessed prior to the workshop through the RIDE website – [Hunt Institute Video Vignettes](#). The site will open to a grid of ELA/Literacy Video Vignettes. At the top of page 2, click on “Writing to Inform and Make Arguments” to access the video on YouTube. By putting the video on pause, you will be able to play it when needed during the workshop.
- Examples of [completed Hand-out 1.2](#) and [completed Hand-out 1.4](#) are provided. They are intended for Facilitator use. They provide answers that participants may offer during this session. They do not include all possible answers; therefore, the Facilitator should feel free to accept the range of responses offered by the participants.

Distribute to Participants:

- [Appendix A](#), pp. 23 - 25
- [Hand-out 1.1: Alpha-Blocks](#)
- [Hand-out 1.2: Graphic Organizer](#)
- [Hand-out 1.3: W.11-12.1, WHST.11-12.1](#)
- [Hand-out 1.4: Frayer Model](#)

Time required: 100 minutes

Introduction (10 minutes)

- The ELA Common Core State Standards defines three types of writing. Explain to participants that they are going to take a few minutes to view a short video vignette entitled [“Writing to Inform and Make Arguments”](#) which provides further information about these three text types.
 - To show video clip, access it through the RIDE website as indicated above under Session Preparation.
 - Ask participants to listen for key points made in the video.
 - After the video, ask participants to turn and talk about what was presented.
 - Share out some key points as a large group.
- Next participants will take a more in-depth look at writing an argument.

Accessing Background Knowledge about Writing Arguments (10 minutes)

Facilitator Note: Using alpha-blocks is a way to activate background knowledge about a topic or concept. Participants think of words or phrases associated with a topic. They place these brainstormed ideas within alphabet groups. The AlphaBlocks technique is credited to Janet Allen.

- Using the Alpha-blocks chart ([Hand-out 1.1](#)), ask participants to brainstorm a list of words or phrases associated with writing an argument.
- Ask them to turn and talk to share their lists.
- Reconvene as a large group and share out several key words or phrases associated with writing an argument.

Connecting to the English Language Arts/Literacy Common Core State Standards

Definition of Argument (20 minutes)

- Distribute [Appendix A](#), pp. 23 -25
- Ask participants to read the definitions of argument and informational/explanatory writing on page 23 and highlight key points that define and characterize argument writing
 - Allow participants to briefly discuss key points with a partner.
 - Reconvene as a larger group and share key points from partner discussions.

Tracing an Argument (20 minutes)

- Explain to participants that the ELA/Literacy Common Core State Standards places a significant emphasis on writing arguments.
 - For the next 10 minutes, they are going to read this section of [Appendix A](#) in order to identify the claim, reasons and evidence that the authors give to support this emphasis on writing arguments.
 - Distribute [Hand-out 1.2](#) to participants.
 - Ask participants to individually read *The Special Place of Argument in the Standards* on pages 24 – 25 in Appendix A (approximately 5 minutes)
 - After 5 minutes, ask participants to form partners or triads and complete [Hand-out 1.2: Argument Graphic Organizer](#)
 - Reconvene and share several reasons and supporting evidence from graphic organizer
 - On the back of the hand-out or on a sticky note, ask participants to answer the following question:
 - Do you believe that the emphasis on argument writing is valid? Why or why not?
 - Share out responses as a large group.
- Comparing Argument and Persuasion (10 minutes)
 - Direct participants to turn to page 24 to locate the shaded box (“Argument “and “Persuasion”) in the middle of the page.

- Ask participants to read the text and think about what distinguishes argument writing from persuasive writing.
- Discuss this with a partner
- Reconvene as a larger group and share the distinctions.

Facilitator Note:

- *Persuasive techniques include appeal to credibility, character or authority of writer or speaker*
 - *Persuasive techniques often appeal to the emotions of the audience.*
 - *Logical argument convinces audience because of the merit and reasonableness of the claims and proofs*
- This provides a brief distinction between writing arguments and persuasive writing. Now explain to participants that they are going to take a closer look at what writing an argument looks like in the Common Core State Standards.

“Common Language” (15 minutes)

In order to have a common language when writing an argument, participants are going to look closely at the CCSS Grades 11-12 standard.

- Distribute [Hand-out 1.3: W.11-12.1, WHST.11-12.1](#)

Facilitator Note: This handout includes the argument writing standard in English Language Arts as well as the argument writing standard in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. Ask participants to select the standard that most closely relates to their teaching area. Elementary teachers and ELA teachers should look at W.11-12.1. Teachers of grades 6-12 history/social studies, science, or technical subjects should look at WHST.11-12.1. Because the standards are very close, the key vocabulary that teachers share will be essentially the same. Content teachers, however, may also mention that their standard refers to “discipline-specific” content and “discipline-appropriate” form.

- Ask participants to read their standard and highlight the key vocabulary
- Share out key terms and discuss definitions
 - Make sure the following terms are discussed:
 - Claim – A statement of the writer’s position on a particular, arguable topic; a thesis.
 - Counterclaim – A claim that opposes or disagrees with the thesis/claim. In logical argumentation, counterclaims should be presented fairly and thoroughly. A writer often raises counterclaims because he anticipates that they are already in the minds of the audience and need to be addressed.
 - Evidence – Facts, figures, details, quotations, or other sources of data and information that provide support for claims or an analysis and that can be evaluated by others; should appear in a form and be derived from a source widely accepted as

appropriate to a particular discipline, as in details or quotations from a text in the study of literature and experimental results in the study of science

- Reason – a statement that supports a given claim, making it more than a simple assertion or opinion. Reasons are the writer’s explanation or justification for what he claims.

- Ask participants to go back to the Alpha-Blocks, [Hand-out 1.1](#) and add any new words to their own charts.

Framer Model (15 minutes)

Facilitator Notes: The Framer Model is a graphic organizer that is used to analyze words and promote vocabulary building. Participants define and list the characteristics of a concept and then synthesize/apply this information by identifying examples and non-examples of the concept.
<http://www.justreadnow.com/strategies/framer.htm>

As a way to reflect on today’s discussion, participants are going to use the Framer Model to synthesize their thinking about writing an argument.

- Distribute [Handout 1.4: Framer Model](#) to participants.
- Ask participants to work with a partner to complete the Framer Model.
- Ask one group to share their completed Framer Model. Other participants can add additional thinking.