

Teaching Argument Writing in Grades 6-12

University of Missouri–St. Louis

Gateway Writing Project

Developing students' ability to write

an argument has become a focus for preparing students for college and career readiness. Writing logical arguments based on substantive claims, sound reasoning, and relevant evidence is a cornerstone of

Missouri will begin including argument writing in its annual testing program.

the Common Core Writing Standards. Argument writing is also being viewed as a vehicle to generate and demonstrate students' knowledge and understanding in all content areas.

In response to the anticipated need to provide teachers with effective approaches and strategies to teach argument writing, the Gateway Writing Project (GWP), the National Writing Project affiliate at the University of Missouri–St. Louis, has developed a professional development opportunity that will help lay the foundation for teaching argument writing.

The program stresses the positive implications of the word “argument” so that students learn and experience the qualities of civil discourse while examining and presenting issues that are complex and timely.

We need to teach students to “read like a detective and write like an investigative reporter.”

David Coleman, the co-author of the Common Core Literacy Standards, has asserted that we need to teach students to “read like a detective and write like an investigative reporter.” Taking this assertion to heart, the GWP focus is to demonstrate ways to learn how to read text carefully and then to write clearly about it.

Program Overview

Teaching Argument Writing in Grades 6-12 is scheduled to start as a two-day summer program with a follow-up date in the fall for up to 30 area language arts, content area, and career education teachers.

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Dates

- June 19-20, 2014
- Fall date TBA

Times

8:00 AM–3:30 PM

Location

University of Missouri–St. Louis
Social Sciences Building (SSB) 449

Cost

- \$300 per person
- \$275 per person for districts sending teams of 3 or more teachers;
- \$200 for teachers who have completed a GWP summer institute

For registration information,

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UMSL



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Topics to be Addressed Include:

Why argue? Argument as civil discourse



Norms of a safe learning community



The importance of talk



The rhetorical context
(*topic, audience, stance, purpose*)



Inquiry and research



Clarification of terms
(*claim, evidence, warrants, backing, rebuttal*)



Types of appeals to use in argument
(*logos, pathos, ethos*)



Types of argument
(*fact, judgment, policy*)



Counter-argument



Logical fallacies



Organization of an argument



Good writing essentials



Discussion protocols



Assessment



The Program

GWP instructors—all experienced secondary teachers—will present information and share ideas/strategies they have used with their students. Time will be allotted for teachers to plan their approach to argument writing. Teachers should leave the summer program with essential strategies for teaching argument writing and a plan for a future lesson/unit of study.

Scope of the Program

The Common Core Standards, especially those focusing on writing, have been developed in response to a demonstrated need to prepare students to think more critically. Past reform efforts also have called for writing in the curriculum. The response, however, has often been to look to formulaic approaches to writing instruction that neither result in critical thinking nor good writing.

There is no magic wand or silver bullet that can cure the problem of poor literacy skills, especially in schools that have long been deemed as “failing.” The goal, then, of *Teaching Argument Writing in Grades 6-12* is to prepare teachers to teach the first levels of argument. For those participating in this program, GWP will later offer more advanced writing instruction which will include other approaches to writing about information.