

Agenda: Teaching Argument Writing in Middle School

NOTE: Anything that is underlined in the agenda is a handout.

1.0: Warm-up—How's it going?

1.1: We've been working with the new Utah Core Standards for two to three years now. Reflect in writing: what has your experience teaching argument writing been?

1.2: With a partner (or in writing if a partner is not available): highlight any successes or challenges teaching argument writing that have been a significant learning experience. We will share a sample

2.0: The Academic Language of the Argument Standards

2.1: Read the "Argument Reading and Writing Standards" handout. As you read, annotate the text and identify argument terms as well as academic vocabulary. Create a 4 square graphic organizer to take notes, with **reading: argument terms** in a box, **reading: academic vocabulary** in a box, **writing: argument terms** in a box, and **writing: academic vocabulary** in a box.

2.2: It is important to explicitly teach the *language* of argument to our students, but also academic vocabulary. Share with a partner: How would you instruct students on the words you selected? We will hear a sample.

NOTE: It is important to stick to the language in the standards. There are many differently "types" of argument. Rogerian, Tolman, inductive, deductive, etc. For our purposes with middle school students, mastering argument as it is stated and structured in the standards is most important, and this will provide a foundation for upper secondary grades to build upon.

RESOURCE: The "Core Standards Skill Words" handout was developed by teachers at Glendale Middle School as an instructional tool for teaching the academic language of the Core Standards.

3.0: Identify Elements of Argument in a Student Essay or Mentor Text

3.1: On one of the mentor texts (Keep on Reading: The Purpose of Education; Years Gone By; Ain't I a Woman) underline the claim(s), number the reasons, and next to each piece of evidence put a + if it is sound, credible, and relevant, or a - if it is not sound, is not credible, or is irrelevant.

NOTE: As we scaffold students into argument writing we sometimes use artificial structures like the 5 paragraph essay. However, it is important that students read arguments that follow that structure AND arguments that DO NOT follow that structure. It is also important that students read arguments about issues as well as arguments about literature. Students need to be able to identify and analyze arguments in many forms and on many topics, and then write arguments in many forms on many topics.

RESOURCE: I developed the "Color Coding an Argumentative Essay" handout as a scaffold to help students identify the argument elements of a five-paragraph essay or to use as a self edit/peer edit tool.