

Choosing the Best Warrant Writing Exercise



In this activity students are asked to write a paragraph that explains why one warrant for believing a claim is superior to a different potential warrant for believing that same claim. In essence, students perform the Best Warrant Mini Debate task in writing. Students start with a graphic organizer that has space to write a claim and two warrants for that claim. This material can be generated by students for homework, taken from a prior activity, developed as a class, or simply provided by the teacher. Students then decide which warrant they believe is stronger and think of two reasons that warrant works well. They also generate two reasons why the other warrant is comparatively weak and note this information on the graphic organizer. Finally, they weave their thoughts into a paragraph such as the following:

“The strongest reason for believing [the claim] is [the better warrant]. First, [one reason the warrant is effective]. Second, [another reason the warrant is effective]. Some would argue that [the weaker warrant] is a better reason to believe [the claim], but that is untrue for two reasons. First, [one reason the warrant is ineffective]. Second, [another reason the warrant is ineffective]. Thus, [the better warrant] is clearly the best reason to believe [the claim].”

Of course more advanced students will not need this much scaffolding—teachers know their students best and will decide just how much guidance to give them. In any case, this exercise, like the Choosing the Best Warrant Mini Debates, encourages students to think about what makes some warrants stronger than others. Like its oral counterpart, too, it works well as a follow-up to activities that generate a variety of warrants for a given claim--Identifying Evidence in a Text or Breaking Down a Text, for instance.



Step	Teacher Move	Student Move
1	Distribute graphic organizers to the class that have space for students to fill in a claim and two warrants.	
2	Guide students through completing the graphic organizer, whether as individuals or an entire class.	Fill out the blanks in the graphic organizer.
3	Instruct students to decide which warrant is strongest and write two reasons why that warrant is strong.	Determine the strongest warrant and write two reasons you think it is strong on the graphic organizer.
4	Instruct students to come up with two reasons why the other warrant is weaker.	Write two reasons why the other warrant is weak in the graphic organizer.
5	If necessary, provide additional scaffolding to help students synthesize these ideas into a paragraph.	Write a paragraph explaining why one of your warrants supports your claim more effectively than the other does. Be sure to include two reasons the stronger warrant is effective and two reasons the weaker warrant is ineffective.