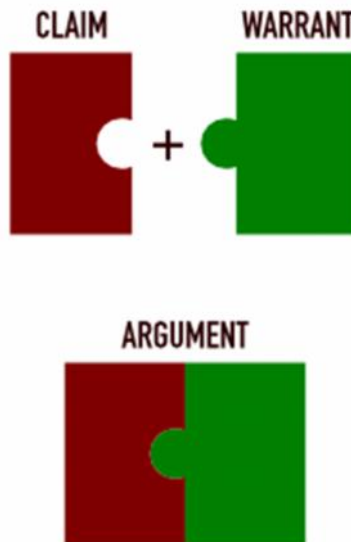


Skill 1. Making a Basic Argument



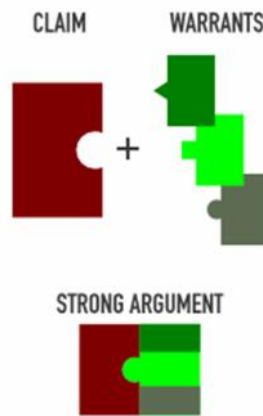
Students understand the building blocks of an argument: a claim and a warrant. The claim states the basic and controversial premise of the argument; the warrant provides a reason to believe the claim.

While the language here may be new to students, the basic concept should not be. Students make claims every day, ranging from “we get too much homework” to “my shoes are cooler than yours.” The trick is having students understand that simply making an assertion is not the same as making a complete argument. Put simply, a warrant is a “because” statement explaining why the claim is true. So, “we get too much homework” is not a complete argument, but “we get too much homework because I never have time to finish it and also get enough sleep” certainly is. Though the warrant itself might not be terribly persuasive, the statement as a whole is a complete argument.

Skill One Objectives

- Students demonstrate understanding that a complete argument includes both a claim and a warrant.
- Students are able to distinguish between a simple assertion and a complete argument.
- Students demonstrate the ability to make a complete argument.

2. Making a Strong Argument



Students are able to support an argument with persuasive warrants and identify why some warrants are more effective than others.

This skill is more of an art than the previous one. It asks students to use their judgment to determine the strongest reasons to believe a particular claim. In some cases, the relative strength of one warrant over another is obvious (“we get too much homework because I never have time to sleep” versus “we get too much homework because I never have time to pursue my quest to beat every videogame ever invented”). Here, students should have a fairly easy time explaining why one warrant effectively supports the claim (sleep is probably pretty important for effective learning) and one is irrelevant (ensuring students have time to play excessive amounts of videogames is not a goal of the education system). In other cases, however, warrants may be equally supportive of the claim (“schools should teach art regularly because taking a break from academic study helps students learn better” versus “schools should teach art regularly because most colleges want creative students”). In this instance, students can still reasonably suggest that either warrant is persuasive.

It is also important to note that different types of warrants strengthen different types of claims and persuade different types of audiences. In some cases statistics are most effective; in other situations logic, arguments from authority, personal testimony, or appeals to emotion might work best. In weighing such considerations, students learn not only to argue but also to communicate—to adapt their arguments to various audiences and contexts.

Skill Two Objectives

- Students are able to support an argument with persuasive warrants
- Students are able to identify why some warrants are more effective than others
- Students are able to identify different types of warrants
- Students demonstrate understanding that different types of warrants persuade different types of audiences

3. Using Text as Evidence to Support an Argument



Students are able to identify portions of a text that support both their own arguments and those of the author. They are also able to explain how the evidence they identify strengthens those arguments.

There are many ways to strengthen a basic argument, but using textual evidence is probably one of the most common and effective methods. From literature papers to lab reports, identifying supporting arguments in others' works and explaining why they back up a point you are trying to make is a fundamental academic skill. The emphasis that the Common Core State Standards place on this skill underscores its importance for college and career success. Using textual evidence effectively requires students to first identify the portion of the text that they believe acts as a warrant for the claim they are defending. Unfortunately, many students stop here, content that the connection between the quotation and the claim it supports is self-evident. In the vast majority of cases, effective use of textual evidence requires students to take an additional step and explain why the quotation supports the claim they are defending. The activities in this manual ensure that students accomplish all of these steps.

Skill Three Objectives

- Students are able to identify the author's main claim
- Students are able to explain how the textual evidence they identify strengthens the author's main claim
- Students are able to identify portions of a text that support their own arguments
- Students are able to explain how the textual evidence they identify strengthens their arguments

4. Responding to Counterarguments



Students are able to anticipate and respond to arguments intended to weaken their own claims.

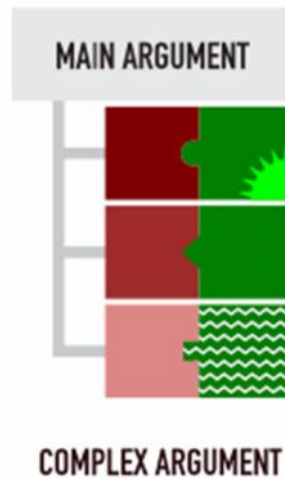
This represents a higher level of argumentation—beyond simply constructing an argument, students must practice defending it against challenges. On the surface, this is fairly straightforward. An argument with an easily dismissed warrant is hardly very strong, and students who choose strong warrants will likely be able to explain why those warrants are strong in the first place. Practicing these defenses, however, is essential for helping students learn to tackle the objections to their arguments head-on instead of skirting the issues and merely re-stating their original claim and supporting warrants. Moreover, as students become more able to refute challenges, they will also begin to anticipate objections to their arguments and hence construct them in order to avoid these challenges.

Like learning to choose the strongest warrant, learning to respond to counterarguments is a difficult but important task. Students typically have no problem staking out a position, but understanding why others would disagree is much harder. Being able to appreciate and respond to opposing arguments strengthens the student's original case or exposes a fatal flaw that could lead him to change his mind. Strong college papers discuss and refute potential counterarguments, and success in the real world requires the ability to anticipate likely objections to avoid being blindsided. Again, this skill will continue developing throughout students' academic careers, but early exposure will give students plenty of time to practice.

Skill Four Objectives

- Students are able to define a counterargument.
- Students are able to identify counterarguments in text.
- Students are able to anticipate arguments intended to weaken their own claims.
- Students are able to respond to arguments intended to weaken their own claims.

5. Structuring a Complex Argument



Students are able to ensure that a variety of warrants work together clearly and effectively to support an overarching claim.

Structuring a complex argument is the pinnacle of Evidence-Based Argumentation. Here students weave together all of the previous skills, making multiple strong arguments with supporting textual evidence surrounding a central theme. These arguments flow from one to another, uniting to make a persuasive case about a complex issue. What has just been described is an essay, of course, but students are often more comfortable verbalizing thoughts than writing them. Evidence-Based Argumentation helps students realize their overall argument is stronger when it is well organized, improving their writing skills even when they are not actually writing.

Skill Five Objectives

- Students are able to write a clear overarching claim/ thesis statement
- Students are able to write 3 warrants supporting the overarching claim, each with some type of evidence
- All student arguments are persuasive / non-trivial
- Students are able to use textual evidence/ quotations to support at least one argument
- Students are able to explain how the textual evidence supports at least one warrant
- Students are able to predict and defend against at least one counterargument
- All student arguments work well together and did not contradict