Big Idea/ Topic

The Power of Argument Writing: How to Build Confidence Using CCW Technique
Lesson One: Getting the Baseline

This is the first lesson of a 10-segment lesson series on the “Power of Argumentative Writing.” This lesson primarily works to introduce the topic, and it results in students writing a baseline argumentative essay which will be used to aid in growth comparisons with the final essay.

Essential Questions:
How can I empower myself through my writing?
How can I show growth in my argumentative writing proficiency this year?

NOTE: This learning plan uses specific texts (e.g., written, performed, illustrated) as concrete examples of standards-based learning activities. These texts are not endorsements. The selection of classroom texts is completely a local decision and subject to local approval processes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Targets</th>
<th>Lesson “Small Make(s)”</th>
<th>Unit “Big Make”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • I can **connect** to something I know to help me understand something new. | • Baseline argumentative essay: Which is more important: talent or hard work? | Summative Argumentative Essay  
• CCW Rubric for Scoring  
- Growth Reflection |
| • I can **compose** argumentative writing that features the primary genre characteristics. | | |

*adapted from Cris Tovani’s *Why Do I Have to Read This? Literacy Strategies to Engage our Most Reluctant Readers* (2021)

Standard Alignment

• **ELAGSE11W1** (Introduce precise claims and organize claims, counterclaims, reason, and evidence; develop claims and counterclaims; create cohesion; establish and maintain formal tone; provide appropriate conclusion)

• **ELAGSE1W4** (Produce clear and coherent writing.)
This mini unit is written for synchronous distance learning or face-to-face learning that utilizes various technology resources. Everything listed as synchronous can be utilized with little to no change in a face-to-face (f2f) environment. However, guidance is provided for modifications, including ideas for supporting students who are learning asynchronously and those with little or no access to technology (unplugged / offline).

Materials
Teacher—virtual whiteboard (shared document), debatable prompts, Teacher Slide Deck to use with Google, Powerpoint (or with a program like Peardeck)

Students—reader & writer’s notebooks, Power of Argument Writing: Lesson One Handout (Unplugged)
**Engage**

**Opening:** [Increase student motivation and engagement in literacy learning [Moderate evidence] (Kamil, et al., 2008)].

**Synchronous or Asynchronous**

1. Via live discussion with an accompanying presentation and/or utilizing the tools listed here, introduce the rationale for the importance of argumentative writing (Powerpoint or Google Slides with the free **Loom Extension** for narration or **Pear Deck Extension** for more student interaction).

**Unplugged/Offline**

1. Have students read Part I of the **Power of Argument Writing: Lesson One Handout (Unplugged)**.
2. If possible, try to find a way to communicate with students about their thoughts and to provide feedback (even if it is via phone call or Google Voice).

**Explore**

**Synchronous or Asynchronous**

1. Briefly explain the process you will be undertaking together, and emphasize that it will be collaborative. It is important for students to feel supported in their writing growth, and there are many ways in which teachers and students engage in writing processes. Facing the hard truth that writing is scary for students often helps them feel more open to the idea that we are going to spend the next several weeks immersed in writing. Be sure to demonstrate that you will be working collaboratively to establish a solid foundation upon which to build throughout the year.
2. Complete the first writing baseline.
   - **(Prompt: Which is more important: talent or hard work?)**
   - **(Link for other DEBATABLE prompts that could be used for a cold write)**
3. To grow, we need a baseline. I call this day “ripping off the bandaid” because we write on day one.
4. Introduce the agenda for the rest of the day: complete the baseline and reflect/discuss how that made us feel.
   - **The best thing you can do when asking students to perform a cold write is to show that you are willing to do it too. However, see the note for scaffolding under Student Supports.**
Apply

*Synchronous or Asynchronous*

Set a timer and write for no more than 50 minutes. In a traditional setting, students would have the option to type for 50 minutes or to write on a hardcopy.

**See Tending Notes in Student Supports Section**

Depending on the platform you are using, you can invite but not require students to share their writing with one another. However, they should turn in their baseline paper to you in some form or fashion so that you can provide them feedback at the next class session. [EBP: Use assessment of student writing to inform instruction and feedback [Minimal evidence] (Graham, et al., 2016)].

*Unplugged/Offline*

1. Have students complete Part II of the [Power of Argument Writing: Lesson One Handout (Unplugged)].
2. If possible, try to find a way to communicate with students about their thoughts and to provide feedback (even if it is via phone call or Google Voice).

*Reflect*

*Synchronous or Asynchronous*

Students choose a small part the situation they are comfortable with sharing and describe how they felt writing via *synchronous* discussion, a breakout group, on a shared document, the chat function, or via Flipgrid. What was the hardest part about writing that argumentative piece? What was your favorite part? What part did you feel the best about writing? What questions do you have? [EBP: Help students build explanations by asking and answering deep questions [Strong evidence] (Pashler et al., 2007)].

Ask students why they think many people experience writing blocks? Explain that writing exposes a certain degree of vulnerability but reassure them that they are in a safe space and that you will grow together. Let them know you look forward to working with them throughout the unit so you will all grow together.

*Unplugged/Offline*
1. Have students complete Part III of the [Power of Argument Writing: Lesson One Handout (Unplugged)].
2. If possible, try to find a way to communicate with students about their thoughts and to provide feedback (even if it is via phone call or Google Voice).

### Evidence of Student Success

As this is the first lesson in the *Power of Argument Writing* unit, the formative assessment of students' discussions and writings will serve as evidence of student success in this lesson.

**Diagnostic Assessment:**
- Argumentative Writing Baseline Essay
- CCW Argumentative Writing Rubric

### Student Learning Supports

At all levels, the English Language Arts standards encourage students to become critical thinkers and communicators. The following strategies are designed to support students who are either struggling to meet this lesson’s learning target and/or are exceeding and would benefit from enrichment.

**Supports/Scaffolding**

- **Conceptual Processing:** Allow additional processing time. Review this content prior to the lesson occurring so that the student will have additional time to formulate responses. Summarize each lesson segment and keep summary accessible for students. Implement scaffolds identified below for various circumstances.
- **Language:** Prior to beginning of the lesson, explicitly teach vocabulary required to engage with the content. [EBP: Explicit vocabulary instruction [strong] (Kamil, et al., 2008)].
- **Visual-spatial Processing:** Provide opportunities for students to engage with visual representations and/or manipulatives (virtual or concrete) as they explore concepts of power and communicate ideas.
- **Organization:** Maintain logical progression of big ideas/lesson segments in the course’s shared virtual space so that students can revisit lesson segments as necessary. Help students bookmark frequently utilized sites (such as Flipgrid) or how to group tabs in Chrome to assist with organization.
- **Memory:** Maintain logical progression of big ideas/lesson segments in the course’s shared virtual space so that students can revisit lesson segments, as necessary.

### Scaffolds for Work Session (Apply) - Tending

If you are in a face-to-face setting, modeling can be beneficial. However, if you have students who are very obviously stuck or in a state of panic, tend to their needs. It may be useful to begin writing and modeling that you can do the task, and when the majority are engaged, get up to check on everyone’s progress, drifting and chatting with those who may need a bit more prompting to get their thoughts on paper. Having students sit and be actively frustrated is not going to encourage their...
participation in future lessons. This lesson provides a baseline, but if they do not participate, you will not get an accurate baseline.

For ideas on conferencing, see Tips for Conferencing and Small Group Sessions (Roberts, 2018).

**Acceleration/Extension**

ELA.GSE.11-12.W7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

- Have students engage in research and create their own prompt that can be used to construct an argumentative paper.

---

**Engaging Families**

Aligning with your district’s family engagement plan to facilitate the most meaningful way to work with your families. At the secondary level, much of the communication occurs with the student serving as a liaison.

- Encourage students to go home and discuss their baseline argumentative topic with their families, perhaps even to open a respectful debate.

---

**References**


