Write from the Beginning… and Beyond

Argumentative

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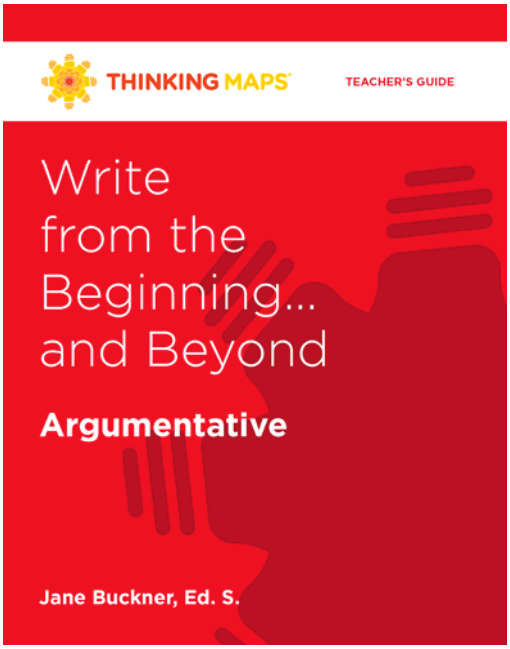

Spiral-bound
Training Manual

THINKING MAPS

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About the Author

Jane Buckner, Ed.S.

With over forty years of experience in the public school system, Jane's work with elementary and middle school teachers, as well as college students, enabled her to develop the techniques and strategies that are the building blocks of a successful writing program. During Jane's tenure in the public school system, she had several roles. She taught "at-risk," as well as advanced students at various grade levels; she served on several state-level task forces that focused in part on the development of literacy in young children; she was employed for eight years as a K–12 Instructional Specialist for the Gaston County, North Carolina, public school system. While employed as an Instructional Specialist, Jane served as an instructor at Belmont Abbey College, teaching both theory and methods classes to graduate and undergraduate students.

Jane was trained by Dr. David Hyerle in *Thinking Maps: Tools for Learning* and was instrumental in incorporating the program into nine elementary schools in her own school system. She later extended the use of Thinking Maps to middle schools and high schools in her district.

Jane is the author of *Write . . . from the Beginning,* a developmental writing program for elementary students; co-author of *Write . . . for the Future,* a writing program for middle and high school students; and *Thinking Maps: Path to Proficiency for English Language Learners,* an advanced Thinking Maps training that focuses on the language and higher-level thinking needs of English Language Learners and other struggling students. In addition, Jane is a contributing author to Dr. Hyerle's publication, *Student Successes with Thinking Maps.*

Jane's most recent publications include a series of manuals focused on providing a comprehensive writing program for students in kindergarten through eighth grade. These include: *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond Setting the Stage; Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond Narrative Writing; Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond Expository/ Informative Writing;* and *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond Response to Literature.*

Currently, Jane works with Thinking Maps, Inc., as the Director of Writing and as an international consultant, bringing effective tools for organizing and motivating students to practice their best writing.

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Write from the Beginning...and Beyond

Argumentative Writing
(Grades K–8)

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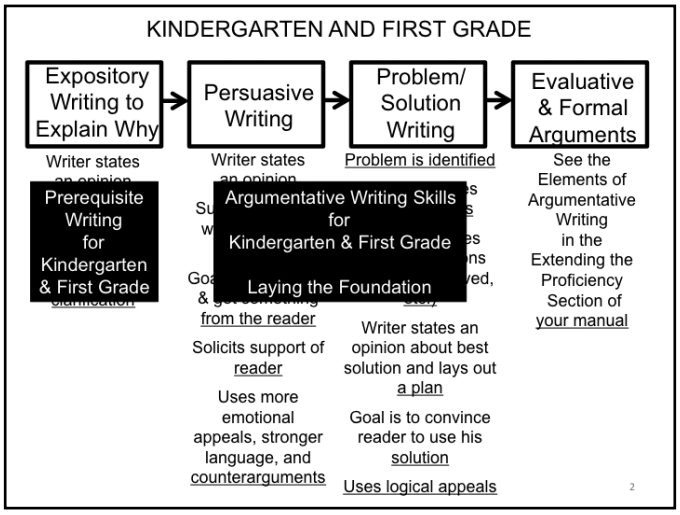
§ What Are the Grade-Level Goals for Argumentative Writing?

Kindergarten and First Grade



The continuum on the right clarifies where kindergarten and first grade students fit in the progression to formal argumentative writing. Note that they need to develop their skills in writing to explain why as a prerequisite before moving forward on the continuum.

Both kindergarten and first grade students will engage in argumentative "thinking" as it is used in both Persuasive and Problem/Solution writing. The overall goal for these grade levels is to "Lay the Foundation."

Using the Focused Journal Writing approach, **kindergarten** students will engage in Persuasive Writing skills by extending their number of reasons for a particular opinion and by addressing why another person may not agree with their opinions (forerunner of the counterargument).

Kindergarten students will be involved in Problem/Solution Writing skills, first through extensive, whole-class experiences of identifying a problem, brainstorming solutions, selecting a solution, and defending why it is the "best" solution to the problem. Following the whole-class activities, the students will respond to problem/solution prompts in their Focused Writing Journals.

Through step-by-step teacher modeling using Thinking Maps, **first grade** students will develop Persuasive Writing skills by responding to prompts covering more controversial topics, rather than merely expressing an opinion in response to a personalized question. They will state a position in an opening sentence, provide reasons for the position, and end with a sentence that gives the reader a sense of closure. Either in the body of the writing or in the closing, the students will acknowledge that others may have a different opinion and state a reason why they might have this differing opinion.

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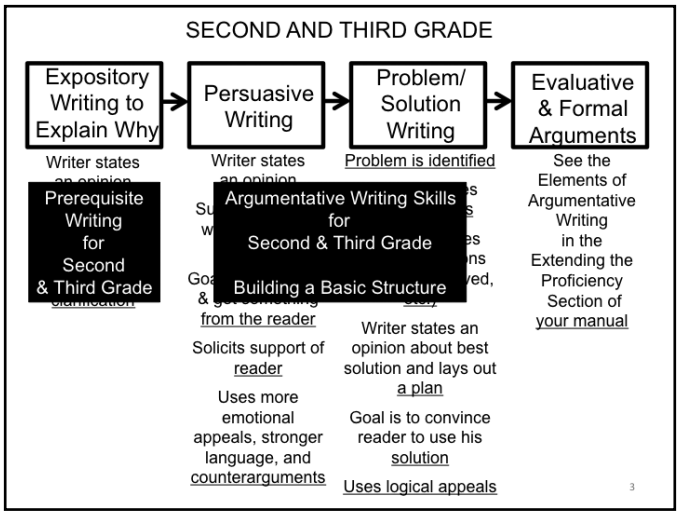
After teacher instruction and whole-group engagement**, first grade** students will respond to Problem/Solution prompts by: identifying the problem in an opening sentence, presenting different solutions to solve the problem, and selecting the "best" solution and reason(s) why. The students should be encouraged to provide reasons why another solution was not the best choice. They should also provide a closing sentence that addresses the effect(s) of implementing the solution.

Second and Third Grade



The continuum on the left illustrates where second and third grade students fit in the progression to formal argumentative writing. As with kindergarten and first grade, these students need to develop their skills in writing to explain why as a prerequisite before moving forward on the continuum.

Both second and third grade students will be working with argumentative "thinking" as it is used in both Persuasive and Problem/Solution writing. These grade levels will be instructed in developing the simple basic structure of each of these types of writing.

Second grade students will be instructed through teacher modeling with Thinking Maps to create a Persuasive composition in response to a prompt. The students will state their positions about the topic in an opening sentence or sentences that will draw the attention of the reader to the *position/choice* rather than to the person who has the position.

The opening position statement will be followed by reasons for the selection. Students will be encouraged to focus more on facts than opinions when they select their reasons. Each reason supplied will be introduced with a word or phrase that links the reason to the position statement. In addition, each reason will be followed by elaboration on the reason, either as a clarification of the reason, an example that supports the reason, or an explanation of why the opposing idea is not as desirable in light of this reason.

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The composition will end with a closing sentence or sentences that provide a sense of conclusion for the reader, with a reaffirmation of the opinion. Either in the body of the writing or in the closing, the students will acknowledge that others may have a different opinion and will provide either a refutation or a statement of disagreement. Second grade students should have at least two examples of acknowledging the opposition in their Persuasive compositions.

After instruction with whole-group activities, **second grade** students will respond to Problem/Solution prompts by: identifying the problem in an opening sentence, suggesting several solutions to the problem with elaboration for each of the solutions, selecting the "best" solution, and stating why the selected solution is better than the alternatives. In a closing sentence the students will provide the effect(s) of implementing the solution.

Third grade students will extend the instruction begun in second grade to create a Persuasive composition in response to a prompt. The students will state their positions about the topic in an opening paragraph that focuses the attention of the reader on the *position/choice* rather than on the person who has the position.

The opening position statement will be followed by reasons for the selection. Students will be encouraged to focus more on facts than opinions when they select their reasons. Each reason supplied will be introduced with a word or phrase that links the reason to the position statement. In addition, each reason will be developed into a paragraph with multiple elaboration sentences that expand upon or clarify the reason. Stronger, authoritative language will be encouraged.

The composition will end with a paragraph that provides a sense of closure for the reader, with a reaffirmation of the opinion and a solicitation of support. Either in the body of the writing or in the closing, the students will acknowledge that others may have a different opinion, and will provide either a refutation or a statement of disagreement.

For Problem/Solution writing, **third grade** students will build on the instruction that was begun in second grade. They will respond to Problem/Solution prompts by: identifying the problem and the possible cause(s) of the problem in an opening paragraph; suggesting several solutions to the problem with elaboration for each of the solutions (e.g., what it might cost, how it would be done, etc.); selecting the "best" solution, and, in a closing paragraph, stating why the selected solution is better than the alternatives.

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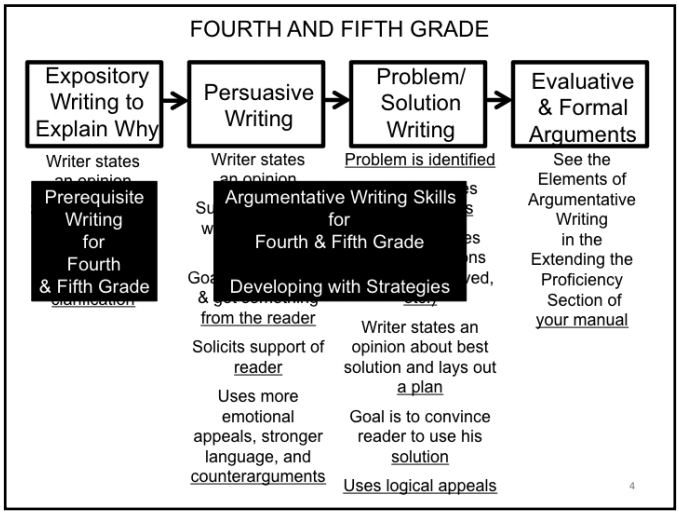
Fourth and Fifth Grade



The continuum on the left clarifies where fourth and fifth grade students fit in the progression to formal argumentative writing. Note that they need to develop their skills in writing to explain why as a prerequisite before moving forward on the continuum.

Both fourth and fifth grade students will engage in argumentative "thinking" as it is used in both Persuasive and Problem/ Solution writing. The overall goal for these grades is to develop these two types of writing using specific strategies. Since the strategies will be introduced over a two-year period through vertical teaming, the grade levels have not been separated for their goals.

Fourth and fifth grade students will expand upon the structurally sound Persuasive compositions created in third grade. The goal for these students is to overlay the basic structure with multiple Persuasive strategies within the two-year grade span to enhance the overall quality of the writing. Student style and voice will be clearly heard.

Specifically, the students will use the following Persuasive strategies:

- A well thought-out opening that introduces the position in an interesting and unique manner
- Quality, global, and distinctly different reasons that appeal to the audience and provide direct support for the position stated
- Transition words and phrases throughout the composition that link ideas to each other and ultimately to the position stated
- Examples (personal, observed, researched) to support the reasons
- Clarification statements to support the reasons
- Stronger, authoritative language
- Acknowledgment and refutation of opposition for each reason
- Solicitation of support
- A well thought-out closing that affirms the position and will "stay with" the reader

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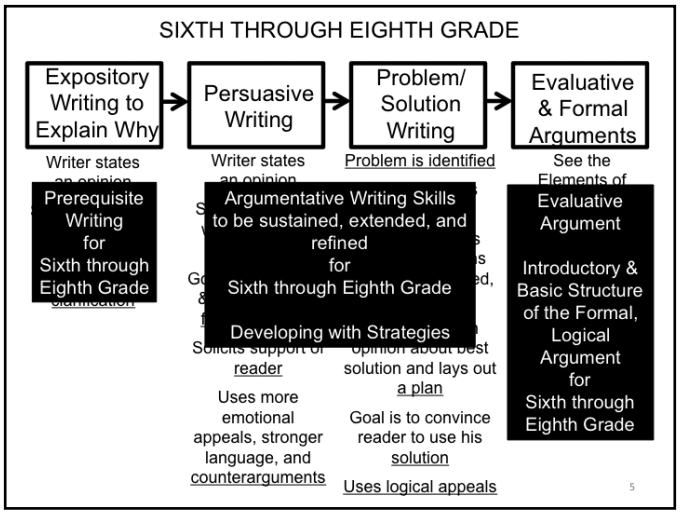
Fourth and fifth grade students will expand upon the structurally sound Problem/Solution compositions created in third grade. The goal for these students is to overlay the basic structure with Problem/Solution strategies within the two-year grade span to enhance the overall quality of the writing. Student style and voice will be clearly heard.

Specifically, the students will use the following Problem/Solution strategies:

- A well thought-out opening that introduces the problem in a unique and interesting manner
- Cause/effect paragraph related to the stated problem
- Establishing criteria to evaluate the quality of the solutions presented
- Developing specific, quality reasons why the solution presented is the most desirable
- Step-by-step articulation for implementing the proposed solution
- A well thought-out closing that affirms the solution and "stays with" the reader

Sixth through Eighth Grade

The continuum on the right clarifies where students in sixth through eighth grade fit in the progression to formal argumentative writing. Note that they need to develop their skills in writing to explain why as a prerequisite before moving forward on the continuum.



Sixth through eighth grade students will continue to engage in argumentative "thinking" as it is used in both Persuasive and Problem/Solution writing. The overall goal for these grades is to sustain, extend, and refine what has been taught in the previous grade levels and carry the skills learned into the more formal argumentative writing, as it has been addressed previously.

Since the formal argument is a more difficult type of writing, the instruction for these particular grade levels will be focused on developing and understanding the basic structure of and elements for this mode of writing.

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Argumentative writing is our BEST thinking translated into printed form for all to consider. Therefore, to write well and to influence others, one must first THINK well.

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Kindergarten Writing to Persuade Rubric

KINDERGARTEN WRITING TO PERSUADE DRAWING PROFICIENCY			
Score = 0 Not Evident	**Score = 1 Emerging**	**Score = 2 Developing**	**Score = 3 Strong**
Drawing is indecipherable OR does not focus directly on response to prompt question OR all of the stated reasons are not represented	Drawing focuses directly on response to prompt question with sparse depiction AND all of the reasons stated are represented	Drawing focuses directly on response to prompt question with adequate depiction AND all of the reasons stated are represented	Drawing focuses directly on response to prompt question with well-developed depiction AND all of the reasons stated are represented
KINDERGARTEN WRITING TO PERSUADE WRITING PROFICIENCY			
Score = 0 Not Evident	**Score = 1 Emerging**	**Score = 2 Developing**	**Score = 3 Strong**
Writing is indecipherable OR writing does not respond directly to prompt question OR writing does not meet the criteria for a Score of 1	Writing has one complete thought with all initial and final sounds represented & adequate spacing The complete thought states an opinion and at least one reason for the opinion	Writing has 2 complete thoughts with either correct capitalization or punctuation, all initial and final sounds represented, & adequate spacing One sentence has an opinion and two reasons and one sentence has a differing opinion OR One sentence has opinion and one sentence has two reasons for the opinion	Writing has 3 complete sentences, correct capitalization & punctuation, all initial and final sounds represented, & adequate spacing One sentence states the opinion, one sentence provides at least two reasons, and one sentence addresses a different opinion

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KINDERGARTEN WRITING TO PERSUADE
CLASS PROFICIENCY REPORT

Assessment of Drawing and Writing **Date: _____**

School:	**Teacher:**		
Name of Student	**Competencies Evaluated**		
	Drawing	**Writing**	**Total**
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			
16			
17			
18			
19			
20			
21			
22			
23			
24			
25			
26			
27			
28			
29			
30			
CLASS SUMMARY			
DRAWING PROFICIENCY	**WRITING PROFICIENCY**		
_____ students scored 0	**_____ students scored 0**		
_____ students scored 1	**_____ students scored 1**		
_____ students scored 2	**_____ students scored 2**		
_____ students scored 3	**_____ students scored 3**		
Class Goal: 50% of students taking assessment (____ students) will score 5–6 pts.			
Class Goal: 80% of students taking assessment (____ students) will score 4 pts.			
Class Attainment: ____% of students taking assessment (____ students) scored 5–6 pts.			
Class Attainment: ____% of students taking assessment (____ students) scored 4 pts.			

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§ How to Model Writing to Persuade in First Grade

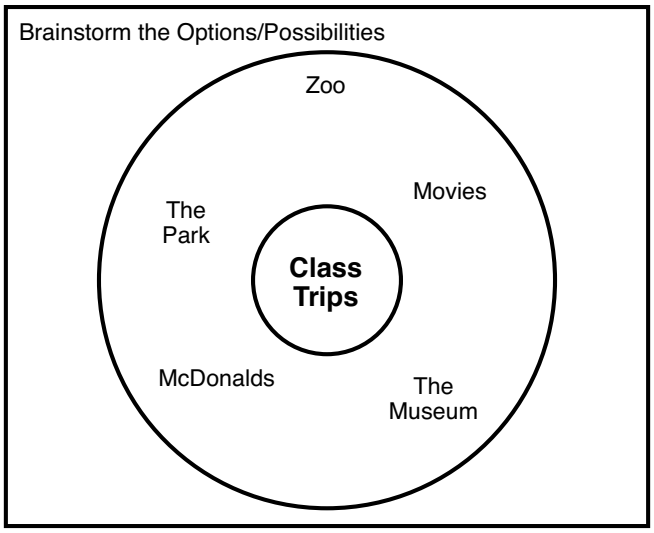
Day 1 of Modeled Writing Lesson Plan

Analyze the Prompt

There are two different ways to present a prompt to first graders. One type of prompt is open-ended:

> ***Think about where our class should go on our end-of-the-year class trip. Provide reasons to convince others to have your same opinion.***

If the prompt is open-ended, the teacher should begin with a Circle Map like the following to brainstorm options and possibilities. Afterwards, the teacher explains to the students that they will need to limit their choices to two possibilities. At this point in the modeling, the teacher will circle two of the most popular choices in the Circle Map and proceed in the same manner as the next type of prompt.



The other type of prompt begins with limited choices; therefore, the Circle Map step is not necessary:

> ***Should the class go to a movie or to the park for our end-of-the-year class trip? Provide reasons to convince others to have your same opinion.***

When analyzing the prompt, the teacher helps the students understand the directives by focusing on key words: *movie or park*, *provide reasons*. The teacher stresses the requirement of eventually selecting one of these two topics and focusing on the purpose of the prompt: *provide reasons.*

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Sample First Grade Problem/Solution Writing Mini-Lesson #2

Guiding Question: What are some different ways to write a closing sentence that states the effects of solving a problem?

Activities

The teacher reviews the "parts" of Problem/Solution writing with the students.

- The opening that tells or states the problem
- The middle that names at least two solutions for the problem
- The middle that tells the best solution and provides reasons why
- The closing that tells what will happen if and when the problem is solved

Next, she explains to the students that they will examine and practice some different ways to write a closing sentence using sentence frames similar to the following:

Once we _____ then_____.

If we _____ then _____.

The problem will be solved and we can _____ if we _____.

After _____, then_____.

We won't have a problem anymore if _____.

Now we have solved the problem so _____.

When _____ our problem will be solved.

Note: The sentence frames should align with the problem and solution being addressed.

The teacher continues by providing practice using a problem, a solution, and varied sentence frames for the closing. She reads the problem and solutions and then demonstrates how to use the sentence frames to write a closing.

The Problem:

We have muddy boots and cannot go into the classroom.

The Best Solution:

We can clean the boots with a wet paper towel.

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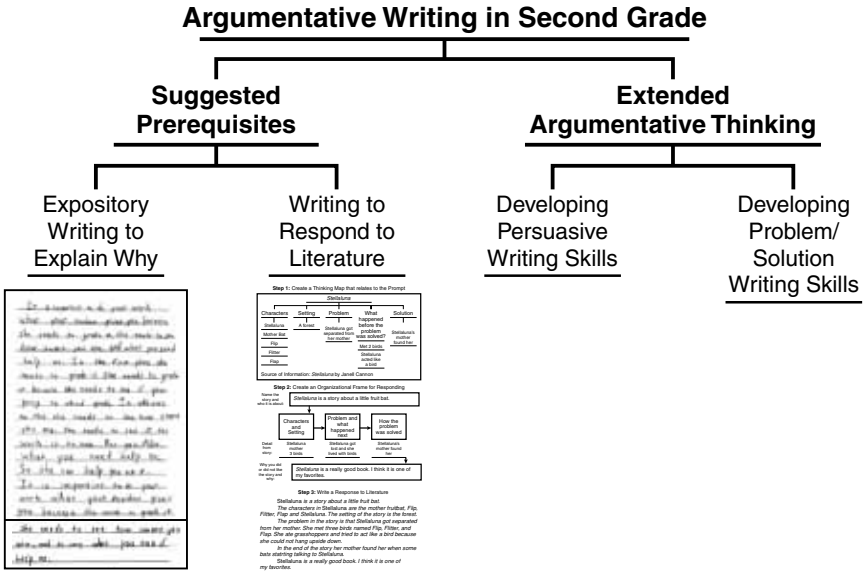
Argumentative Writing

in Second Grade

§ What Does Argumentative Writing Look Like in Second Grade?

Just like the students in kindergarten and first grade, students in second grade know how to express an opinion about their likes and dislikes, what they want and do not want, or what they will and will not do. Through instruction in argumentative thinking and writing, students in second grade will extend what was begun in first grade as they learn how to articulate their opinions and explain their reasons for those opinions, while respectfully acknowledging why the opposing opinion is not as desirable.

Argumentative writing requires a certain level of experience and cognition; therefore, it is important for second grade students to receive instruction in this type of writing that is comfortable and consistent with their developmental and proficiency levels. The Tree Map below shows the prerequisite instruction that is recommended for these students prior to teaching them the more extended argumentative thinking.



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§ How to Model Problem/Solution Writing in Third Grade

Day 1 of Modeled Writing Lesson Plan

Analyze the Prompt

> ***Sometimes the third grade students who attend school assemblies are noisy and disruptive. What is the best solution to this problem?***

The teacher begins by reading the prompt aloud and engaging the students in a conversation about the situation by asking questions such as the following:

- What is the problem?
- Why is this situation a problem?
- What do you think caused the problem?
- Who is affected by the problem? This will be your audience.
- What will be the effects if we do not find a solution to this problem?
- What will be the effects if we do find a solution to this problem?
- What are some possible solutions to this problem?
- Which solution do you think is the best solution? Why do you think it is the best?
- If we used this solution, what would be the steps for solving the problem?
- Which solution do you think is not the best solution? Why do you think it is not the best solution?
- Which solution is the easiest? Why is it the easiest?
- Which solution is the most fair? Why do you think it is the most fair?
- Which solution costs money? Would it cost a little bit of money or a lot of money?
- Which solution does not cost any money?
- Which solution involves the most people?
- Which solution helps the most people?
- Who could help solve the problem for us?
- Who could we go to for ideas about how to solve the problem?
- Is this a problem that the students can help solve or will this problem have to be solved by adults?

She explains that these are the types of questions that we will need to answer when we do Problem/Solution writing.

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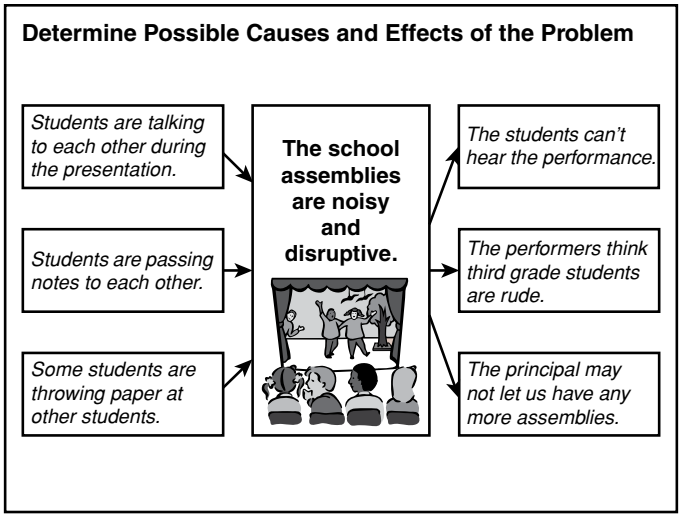
Note: The problems introduced in the prompt can either be real or imaginary. The imaginary prompts usually are realistic, but they do not have to be.

After teacher instruction and whole-group engagement**,** third grade students will respond to Problem/Solution prompts by identifying the problem in an opening paragraph, suggesting several solutions to the problem with elaboration related to each of the solutions, along with selecting the "best" solution and providing reasons why it is better than the other solutions. In a closing paragraph the students will provide the benefits of implementing the selected solution as opposed to any of the others.

Determine the Possible Causes and Effects of the Problem

The teacher explains that when we look at a problem and try to determine the best solutions, it is helpful to examine the possible causes and effects of the problem.

She draws a large Multi-Flow Map and writes the problem in the "event" box.



Next, she engages the students in a conversation about the possible causes and effects of the noisy and disruptive school assemblies. As the students make suggestions, the teacher records their ideas in the appropriate place on the Multi-Flow Map.

She explains to the students that when they think about some possible solutions, they may want to look at the causes of the problem. If we can prevent the causes, then we will have a solution to the problem. It is also important to look at the effects of the problem. If the effects are serious, then the problem needs to be solved as soon as possible. Relating the effects of the problem to the audience instills a sense of urgency and a desire to implement a solution to the problem, rather than ignoring it.

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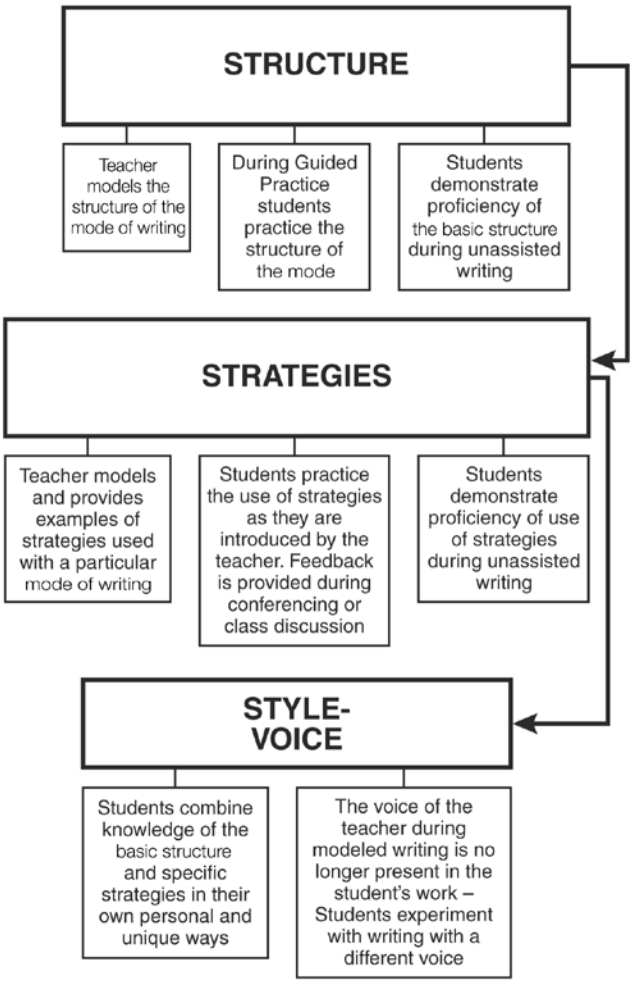
Style and Voice

Style and voice develop over time as students:

- Combine their knowledge of the mode structure and specific strategies in their own personal and unique ways
- The voice of the teacher during modeled writing is no longer present
- The students experiment with writing in a different voice

The most proficient writers are those who understand and use the basic structure of a particular model of writing, overlay the basic structure with numerous strategies associated with good writing, and compose with an authentic and engaging voice.

The Flow Map below shows the developmental progression of writing from understanding the basic structure, to proficient use of various strategies, to the emergence of a distinct style and voice.



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Individual Scoring Sheets for the Basic Structure of Persuasive Writing

Name:
Date:

Basic Structure Persuasive Writing

_____ *18 or more logically sequenced sentences (4 pts)*
_____ *Cap./Punct./Sp./Usage (2 pts)*
_____ *Opening paragraph (2 pts)*
_____ *Closing paragraph (2 pts)*
_____ *Reason sentences (2 pts)*
_____ *Different opinion (2 pts)*
_____ *Transition words/phrases (2 pts)*
_____ *Detail sentences (3 pts)*
_____ *Varied sentences (1 pt)*
_____ *Total Score (possible 20 pts)*

Notes:

Name:
Date:

Basic Structure Persuasive Writing

_____ *18 or more logically sequenced sentences (4 pts)*
_____ *Cap./Punct./Sp./Usage (2 pts)*
_____ *Opening paragraph (2 pts)*
_____ *Closing paragraph (2 pts)*
_____ *Reason sentences (2 pts)*
_____ *Different opinion (2 pts)*
_____ *Transition words/phrases (2 pts)*
_____ *Detail sentences (3 pts)*
_____ *Varied sentences (1 pt)*
_____ *Total Score (possible 20 pts)*

Notes:

Name:
Date:

Basic Structure Persuasive Writing

_____ *18 or more logically sequenced sentences (4 pts)*
_____ *Cap./Punct./Sp./Usage (2 pts)*
_____ *Opening paragraph (2 pts)*
_____ *Closing paragraph (2 pts)*
_____ *Reason sentences (2 pts)*
_____ *Different opinion (2 pts)*
_____ *Transition words/phrases (2 pts)*
_____ *Detail sentences (3 pts)*
_____ *Varied sentences (1 pt)*
_____ *Total Score (possible 20 pts)*

Notes:

Name:
Date:

Basic Structure Persuasive Writing

_____ *18 or more logically sequenced sentences (4 pts)*
_____ *Cap./Punct./Sp./Usage (2 pts)*
_____ *Opening paragraph (2 pts)*
_____ *Closing paragraph (2 pts)*
_____ *Reason sentences (2 pts)*
_____ *Different opinion (2 pts)*
_____ *Transition words/phrases (2 pts)*
_____ *Detail sentences (3 pts)*
_____ *Varied sentences (1 pt)*
_____ *Total Score (possible 20 pts)*

Notes:

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Using Poetry

Before the Activity:

The teacher selects a poem that focuses on a topic that is familiar and appropriate to the grade level. Good sources for this type of poetry are the works of Shel Silverstein and Jack Prelutsky. Some of the poems that the teacher selects can be whimsical in nature, while others will need to be more realistic and serious.

The teacher should plan to present the poem in a form that is visible to the entire class.

Chart paper and markers should be available for each small group of students.

Conducting the Activity:

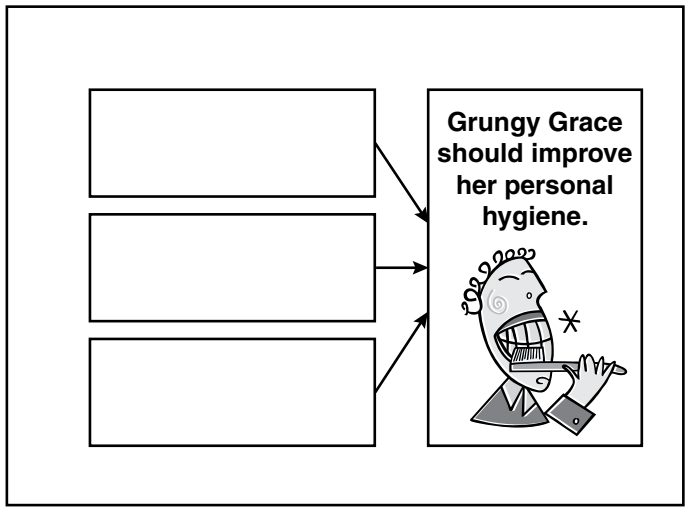
The teacher begins by displaying a poem like "Grungy Grace" by Jack Prelutsky, from *It's Raining Pigs and Noodles*. This poem focuses on the personal hygiene of a young girl who refuses to brush her teeth or wash her hands and face. Instead, she uses tactics to deceive her parents into thinking she has done these.

Afterwards, the teacher engages the group in a discussion of whether or not this is something they have experienced. Included in the discussion should be why their parents might be concerned about the hygiene of their children.

Next, the teacher divides the class into small groups and provides a large piece of paper and markers for each group.

The teacher then instructs each group to create a partial Multi-Flow Map with reasons why Grungy Grace should attend to her personal hygiene as her parents have requested. She should tell the students to focus either on the need for Grace to brush her teeth or the need to wash her hands.

When the groups have completed their maps, the teacher should allow them time to share their ideas with the large group.



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§ How to Model the Basic Structure of Problem/Solution Writing

Note: The goal is for the basic structure of Problem/Solution writing to be solidly in place **by the end of the third grade.** When students enter fourth and fifth grade, the teacher instructs in how to overlay the basic structure with numerous strategies. Following is the modeling that is used with students in third grade to develop the Basic Structure. Teachers will determine if they should begin at this level of instruction with their students or if they should move straight into strategies. The time involved in the modeling of the Basic Structure should be based on the proficiency levels and experience of the students.

Day 1 of Modeled Writing Lesson Plan

Analyze the Prompt

Sometimes students who attend school assemblies are noisy and disruptive. What is the best solution for this problem?

The teacher begins by reading the prompt aloud and engaging the students in a conversation about the situation by asking questions such as the following:

- What is the problem?
- Why is this situation a problem?
- What do you think caused the problem?
- Who is affected by the problem?
- What will be the effects if we do not find a solution for this problem?
- What will be the effects if we do find a solution to this problem?
- What are some possible solutions to this problem?
- Which solution do you think is the best solution? Why is it the best?
- If we used this solution, what would be the steps for solving the problem?
- Which solution do you think is not the best solution? Why is it not the best?
- Which solution is the easiest? Why is it the easiest?
- Which solution is the most fair? Why do you think it is the most fair?
- Which solution costs money? Would it cost a little or a lot of money?
- Which solution does not cost any money?
- Which solution involves the most people?

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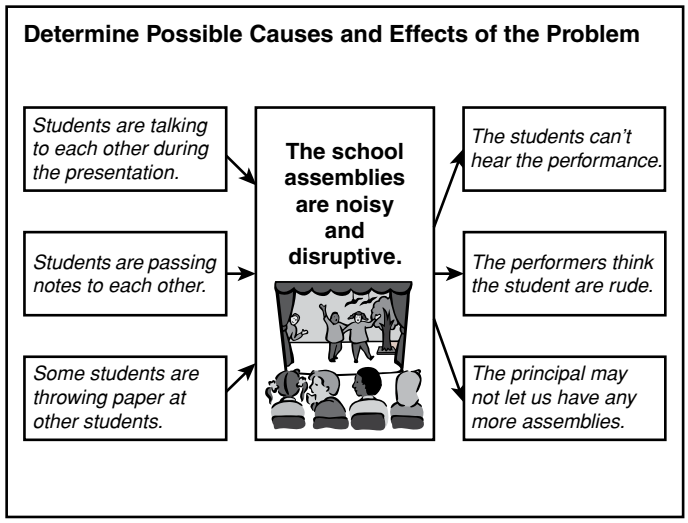
- Which solution helps the most people?
- Who could help solve the problem for us?
- Who could we go to for ideas about how to solve the problem?
- Is this a problem that the students can help solve or will this problem have to be solved by adults?

She explains that these are the types of questions we need to answer when we do Problem/Solution writing.

Note: The problems introduced in the prompt can be either real or imaginary. The imaginary prompts usually are realistic, but they do not have to be.

After teacher instruction and whole group engagement**,** the students will respond to Problem/Solution prompts by: identifying the problem in an opening paragraph, suggesting several solutions to the problem with elaboration related to each of the solutions, selecting the "best" solution, and providing reasons why the selected solution is better than the other solutions. In a closing paragraph, the students will provide the benefits of implementing the selected solution as opposed to any of the others.

Determine the Possible Causes and Effects of the Problem



The teacher explains that when we look at a problem and try to determine the best solutions, it is helpful to begin with the possible causes and effects of the problem.

She draws a large Multi-Flow Map and writes the problem in the "event" box.

Next, she engages the students in a conversation about the possible causes and effects of the noisy and disruptive school assemblies. As the students make suggestions, the teacher records their ideas in the appropriate place on the Multi-Flow Map.

She explains to the students that when they think about some possible solutions, they may want to look at the causes of the problem. If we can stop what causes the problem then we will have a solution to the problem. It is also important to look at the effects of the problem. If the effects are serious, then the problem needs to be solved as soon as

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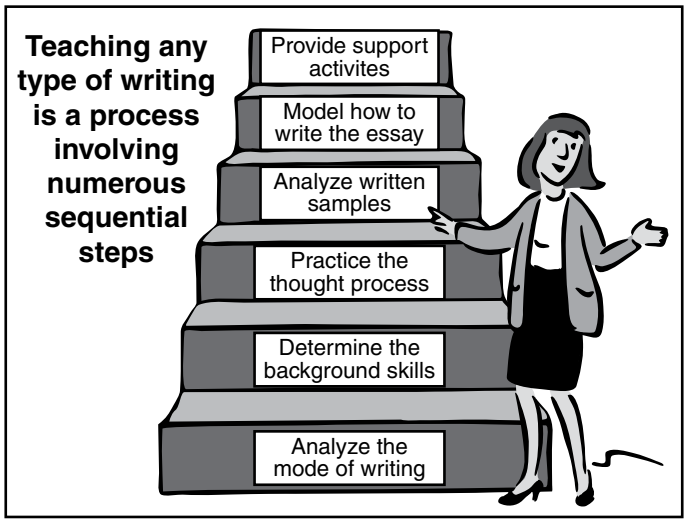
§ Teaching Evaluative Argument Writing

Before teaching a new mode of writing, it is important for the teacher to have an understanding of the elements and purposes for that particular type of writing. As she plans, and as she delivers instruction, it will be important for the teacher to advance through a series of logical steps, shown below.



Analyzing and Exploring the Evaluative Argument

To begin with, teachers will need to **analyze what it means to "evaluate"** something. According to the dictionary, "evaluate" means to *judge, rate, choose, verify, justify,* or *assess.* Evaluative argument writing then would mean debating one's findings after the evaluation. In order to do this most effectively, the evaluation must:

- Include a systematic investigation
- Require an intentional process focused on a particular goal
- Involve a collection of relevant information
- Draw conclusions and make a recommendation backed by evidence from the investigation
- Develop an essay to argue for and support the recommendation so that others are convinced of its validity

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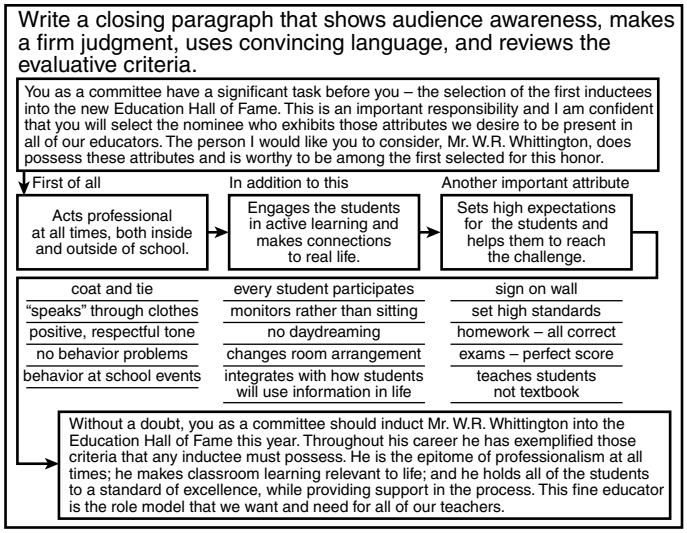
Day 3 of Modeled Writing Lesson Plan

Write a Closing Paragraph

The teacher reminds the students that the closing paragraph should revisit both the writer's opinion and the evaluative criteria. She should stress that the closing paragraph must differ from the opening and leave the reader with the assurance that the writer has used the most appropriate criteria and that his opinion/recommendation adheres to and is supported by those criteria. Also important to the closing paragraph is the continued sense of audience awareness and convincing language.



After reviewing the guidelines for a closing, the teacher adds an additional box at the bottom of her Flow Map and writes her closing paragraph. Depending on student proficiency levels, the teacher could model three or more sentences for her closing.

Using the teacher's guidelines and model, the students draw a box under the last box of their Flow Maps and write their closing paragraphs.

Note: It is helpful to have a chart with suggested sample closing paragraphs for the students to view.

Monitor and Check: Ask for volunteers to share their closing paragraphs as you lead a discussion of whether or not the closing meets the criteria for a good closing. The teacher can also ask the class how the examples that were shared could be written in a different way, using the chart of closing paragraphs that is posted in the room.

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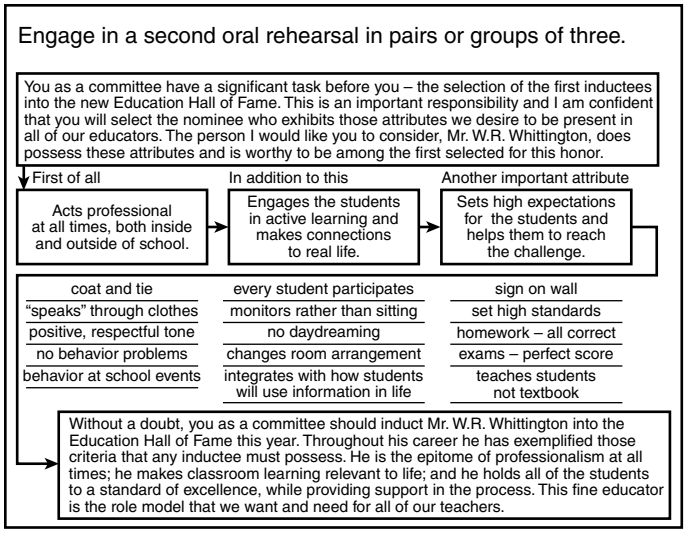
Engage in a Second Oral Rehearsal in Pairs or Groups of Three



The teacher reminds the students how to orally rehearse in pairs or groups of three using her Flow Map.

She emphasizes that she is making complete sentences and that this will help the students when they create their sentences in writing.

Remind the students that this oral rehearsal differs from the one they did earlier. They now have transition words/phrases and a closing to include. Also, encourage the students to expand their sentences during oral rehearsal, to include transition words and phrases within their criterion paragraphs.

The students form groups of two or three and orally rehearse their compositions as the teacher moves from group to group, listening and prompting.

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§ Modeling First Steps in How to Write the Argumentative Essay

Note: Due to the rigorous requirements of this type of writing, the first steps for students in learning to write a formal or academic essay are large- and small-group discussions followed by paired, small-group, and individual compositions. This approach will empower and equip the students to construct individual compositions after they build understanding.

Step 1: Discuss the Issue

Background Information

Argumentative essays focus on controversial issues which are, by definition, issues about which people feel strongly and sometimes disagree vehemently. The issue may involve a practice that has been accepted for some time or it may concern a newly proposed policy. Controversial issues usually have no obvious "right" answer. Often writers cannot offer absolute proof in their compositions about controversial issues because sometimes they are matters of opinion and judgment. Although it may not be possible to prove that a position on a controversial issue is right or wrong, an effective argument can convince others to accept or reject a position.

The Teacher's Role

Introduce a Controversial Discussion Topic to the Class:

Should laptop computers replace textbooks in middle school classrooms?

The teacher should begin a general discussion with the whole class by asking thought-provoking questions such as:

- What would the classroom look like if the students had laptops rather than books?
- How would the students do their assignments?
- Can you foresee any problems that might occur if students were using laptops rather than books?
- Is there anything about having textbooks that might be better than having laptops for every student?
- Do all students benefit from having just laptops or just textbooks in the classroom?

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Recommended Resources

Buckner, Jane. (2011). *Write from the Beginning . . . and Beyond: Response to Literature*. Cary, NC: Thinking Maps, Inc.

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