

KEY COMPONENTS TO ACADEMIC ARGUMENTATION MIDDLE SCHOOL INSTRUCTION AND IMPLEMENTATION SEQUENCE

This is a recommended middle school sequence for the instruction of academic argumentation skills and implementation of skills-building activities. Academic argumentation skills are interconnected, so skills taught at one point during the year will very often be reviewed and re-visited at other points in the sequence. And this skills sequence is a broad guideline for emphasis in instruction, not a set of hard and fast rules.

5th Grade

5th Grade – Quarter 1

Instruction and Activities: Introduction to Debates and Controversies

With emphasis on:

- Taking and defending positions

5th Grade – Quarter 2

Instruction and Activities: Application of Debates and Controversies to Discipline-Specific Issues

With emphasis on:

- Understanding the range of possible positions within the discipline-specific issue
- Making argumentative claims to support a position

5th Grade – Quarter 3

Instruction and Activities: Backing for Argumentative Claims



With emphasis on:

- Fact-based backing for claims
- Logical thinking as backing for claims

5th Grade – Quarter 4

Instruction and Activities: Debating to Develop Argumentation

With emphasis on:

- The process of debating as a way to develop one's own thinking on an issue and to subject argumentative claims and their backing to questions and doubt

Implementation: Conduct an extended in-class debate on a discipline-specific issue



6th Grade

6th Grade – Quarter 1

Instruction and Activities: Overview (or Review) of Controversies and Debates

With an emphasis on:

- Discipline-specific issues
- Positions and argumentative claims
- Backing as fact-based or logical thinking
- The process of debating as a way to develop one's own thinking on an issue and to subject argumentative claims and their backing to questions and doubt

Implementation: Include at least one structured argumentation activity

6th Grade – Quarter 2

Instruction and Activities: Introduce the concept of responding to arguments

With an emphasis on:

- Engaging with the other side's arguments directly
- Two forms of response: talking about their backing, or bringing up a new point

Implementation: Conduct a classroom debate

Instruction and Activities: Argumentation to Writing

Introduce argument writing templates

6th Grade – Quarter 3

Instruction and Activities: Learning Argument Writing Structure

With an emphasis on:

- Introducing the controversy or debate and stating a clear position



- Separating argumentative claims into paragraphs
- Supplying backing for each argumentative claim
- Engaging with at least one reason why your position might be wrong

Implementation: Writing an Extended Argument Essay

Provide an outline to guide students in their argument writing. Integrate the use of templates. Have students peer-edit. And incorporate an opportunity to revise and re-submit the essay.

6th Grade – Quarter 4

Instruction and Activities: How to Determine Who Wins an Argument

With an emphasis on:

- Focusing on the backing for each side's arguments
- Comparing how that backing is explained and analyzed
- Establishing standards: what should guide the choice of one argument over the other
- Accounting for, and sometimes making strategic concessions to, the other side's argumentation

Implementation: Include one developed structured argumentation activity or one classroom debate

Instruction and Activities: Argumentation to Writing

Use argumentation constructs and templates to support students' transfer of learning from spoken argumentation to written argumentation



7th Grade

7th Grade – Quarter 1

Instruction and Activities: Summary

With an emphasis on the performance criteria:

- Accuracy
- Concision

Implementation: Include an in-class summative assessment in which students must summarize brand-new passages, with prompts, with a graphic organizer, without prompts or organizer

7th Grade – Quarter 2

Instruction and Activities: Argumentative Claims

With emphasis on the performance criteria:

- Clarity
- Focus
- Directedness
- Organization

Implementation: Conduct a classroom debate

Assess for the formulation of argumentative claims, among other performance indicators

7th Grade – Quarter 3

Instruction and Activities: Evidence

With emphasis on the performance criteria:

- Alignment
- Credibility



- Sufficiency

Instruction and Activities: Reasoning

With emphasis on the performance criteria:

- Introducing or contextualizing the evidence
- Accenting key parts of the evidence
- Connecting the claim and the evidence
- Emphasizing the significance of the evidence as proof of the claim, and the claim as support for the position

Implementation: Include at least one developed structured argumentation project

Instruction and Activities: Argumentation to Writing

Use argumentation transitions and stems to support students' transfer of learning from spoken argumentation to written argumentation

7th Grade – Quarter 4

Instruction and Activities: Refutation

With emphasis on the performance criteria:

- Responsiveness
- Comprehensiveness
- Depth of thinking
- Level of difficulty

Implementation: Include one classroom debate

Introduce and emphasize the tracking of argumentation throughout the debate. Connect tracking to the refutation demonstrated in the debate.



8th Grade

8th Grade – Quarter 1

Review and Develop:

Argumentative Claims

With emphasis on the performance criteria:

- Focus
- Organization

Refutation

- Depth of thinking
- Level of difficulty

Implementation: Conduct an argument-based seminar

Require use of argument-based discussion constructs, track argumentation, have students evaluate and assess argumentation, and conduct a follow-up writing activity

8th Grade – Quarter 2

Review and Develop:

Summary

With emphasis on the performance criteria:

- Accuracy
- Relevancy

Evidence/Reasoning

- Alignment
- Credibility



- Sufficiency
- Overall strength of reasoning

Implementation: Conduct a Classroom Debate

Emphasize and assess argument building. Track all argumentation and focus on refutation

8th Grade – Quarter 3

Instructional Review: Evaluating Argumentation, or How to Determine Who Wins an Argument

With an emphasis on:

- Focusing on the backing for each side's arguments
- Comparing how that backing is explained and analyzed
- Establishing standards: what should guide the choice of one argument over the other
- Accounting for, and sometimes making strategic concessions to, the other side's argumentation

Implementation: Conduct multiple structured argumentation activities that focus on argument evaluation

8th Grade – Quarter 4

Review and Develop:

Selected skills and selected criteria

Implementation: Conduct final classroom debate, final structured argumentation activities, and final argument-based seminar

Implementation: Administer a final individualized assessment of each student's argumentative thinking, writing, and speaking skills in a portfolio of their college readiness