

Argument Paragraph Unit Overview – 8th Gr.

Our final unit of Trimester 1 will cover constructing an argumentative paragraph. Being able to pick a side of an issue and persuade someone to believe your point is a powerful skill! We will practice that over the next 3 weeks.

The packet for this unit will be due on November 18. The final activity over this unit will be actually writing an argumentative paragraph over a given topic; this will be the project grade for this activity.

Week 1 (Nov. 2-6)

Mon – Name that Evidence Activity + Explain your evidence

Tues – No School

Wed – On Computers...finding & recording evidence for Essay

Thurs – ½ Day...Grammar Video + Packet Assigned (in lab...bring headphones)

Fri – Take a Stand Activity

Week 2 (Nov. 9-13)

Mon – Paragraph Structure Activity

Tues – Topic Sentences

Wed – Drafting Claim & Evidence Day #1

Thurs – Drafting Claim & Evidence Day #2

Fri – Grammar Review in class...Finish and review all WOTW's

Week 3 (Nov. 16-20)

Mon – Citing Sources

Tues – Review of commentary

Wed – Editing your argument paragraph

Thurs – Begin typing final paragraph

Fri – WOTW Quiz (open notes) + Grammar Quiz (no notes) + Finish paragraph

Your topic for the paper will come from any debatable, school-appropriate topic. Anything that is too controversial will not be approved (no abortion, same-sex marriage, or death penalty topics, for example). If you aren't sure, ask!

You may choose the same topic as someone else; but be sure you are doing your own work!

Although most of this is classwork, at home you should be working on your independent reading project and studying for the grammar quiz!

Explain Your Argument

Directions:

1. CLAIM - For each item, state your opinion/preference one way or the other. (Yes, you must pick one.)
2. EVIDENCE - Give two (2) pieces of effective evidence (facts, reasons, details) for why you feel this way.
3. COMMENTARY - Explain how your evidence supports your opinion.

Should students be able to use cell phones at school?	CLAIM
	EVIDENCE
	COMMENTARY
Should the school day begin later?	CLAIM
	EVIDENCE
	COMMENTARY
Should all schools go to year-round school?	CLAIM
	EVIDENCE
	COMMENTARY

NAME THAT EVIDENCE TYPE!

- Label the pieces of evidence below as A for anecdotal or F for factual.
- For bonus points:
 - Indicate whether the Anecdotal Evidence is
 - P = personal
 - F = family or friends
 - A/I = acquaintance or interviewee
 - Indicate whether the Factual Evidence is
 - C = confirmed facts
 - D/S = data or statistics
 - R = research by experts

CLAIM: School lunches aren't as healthy as they should be.

A/F?	Bonus!	Evidence
		"A study by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2006 found that 23.5 percent of high schools offered fast food from places like Pizza Hut and Taco Bell" (<i>The New York Times</i>).
		My friend Michelle says that at her school, French fries and pizza are options in the cafeteria every single day of the week (Chen).
		"One of the first indications of a good lunch program is enthusiasm among the people serving the food," said Marion Nestle, professor of nutrition and food studies at New York University and author of <i>What to Eat</i> (North Point Press, 2007)" (<i>The New York Times</i>).
		Last week, the only thing I ate at school for lunch was tater tots and French fries and by the time I got on the bus, I was starving and had a headache.
		According to the Cafeteria Director at Davis Elementary, who I interviewed last week, for 20 cents more per student, they could make homemade French fries that are baked instead of fried in grease (Jones).
		Though the United States Department of Agriculture is requiring schools to serve healthier foods at lunch, French fries will remain on the menu because potato lobbyists persuaded Congressmen to keep them on the list of approved food. (National Public Radio—npr.org)

Take a Stand Activity

Directions:

1. For each item, state your opinion/preference one way or the other. (Yes, you must pick one.)
2. Give three pieces of effective evidence (facts, reasons, details) for why you feel this way.

Chocolate or Vanilla?	1. 2. 3.
Beach or Mountains?	1. 2. 3.
Math or Language Arts?	1. 2. 3.
Sun or Snow?	1. 2. 3.
Hip-Hop or Country Music?	1. 2. 3.

Evidence Types Mini-Task

	DEBATABLE CLAIM:
Anecdotal	EVIDENCE #1
Factual	EVIDENCE #2
Anecdotal	EVIDENCE #3
Factual	EVIDENCE #4

Name That Paragraph Structure!

- Underline the key claim in the paragraph.
- Highlight the evidence in blue.
- Highlight the commentary in yellow.
- In the box next to each paragraph, put a "B" for **block organization** or an "A" for **alternating organization**.

Organization A or B?	Argument Paragraph
	<p>Adapted from "Unhappy in Uniform" in <i>Teen Ink</i> by Charlotte Petit from Eau Claire, WI http://www.teenink.com/opinion/school_college/article/224086/Unhappy-in-Uniform/</p> <p>School uniforms greatly diminish the social boundaries that naturally occur with casual dress. Maria, a 9th grader featured in a PBS (Public Broadcasting Service) article titled, "School Uniforms" said, "It helps that everyone is wearing the same thing. There's less focus on clothes." Reginald Wilson, a senior scholar at the American Council on Education in Washington, D.C., who was also featured in the article said, "Certainly the competition to wear the best shoes or the best sweaters and so forth has been prevalent in school ever since I was in school, and the poor kids felt inferior." High school hierarchy is unavoidable, but it can definitely be reduced. And school uniforms can help; you can't make fun of someone or judge their personality based on what they're wearing if you and everyone else are wearing the same thing, as Maria pointed out. Reginald Wilson's quotation underscores that low-income students are the ones hit hardest by the social hierarchy that's determined by who is wearing the most fashionable clothes. Yet while social boundaries may be softened by school uniforms, kids will be kids and there will always be a pecking order at school.</p>
	<p>Adapted from "Disguising Potential" in <i>Teen Ink</i> by Michael C from Lafayette, CA http://www.teenink.com/opinion/school_college/article/171633/Disguising-Potential/</p> <p>In addition to the strong force of individualism, uniforms also violate self-expression, an inalienable right that is guaranteed in the First Amendment of the Constitution. Preventing students from expressing their personal beliefs is wrong, because it impedes growth and denies rights that every human being should have. According to the American Civil Liberties Union, a strong opponent of uniforms, none of the arguments for school uniforms, including the claim that they can reduce violence in schools, justifies trampling the rights of students to express themselves. Freedom of speech is not only literal verbal speech, but includes the expression in symbols and clothing as well. In fact, in 1999, although 66% of parents living in Lafayette County, Mississippi agreed with the use of uniforms, the majority also believed that uniforms eliminated clothing as a means of cultural and symbolic expression. These results show that uniforms restrict free expression, which is clear to both proponents and opponents of uniforms. The fact that symbolic expression is considered freedom of speech is very significant, as it makes uniforms a clear violation to the Bill of Rights, which states there should be no law "abridging freedom of speech." No child should grow up in an environment of censorship and suppression. To keep self-expression from happening goes against the guidelines of the Constitution.</p>

Practice with Topic Sentences

Dissect These Sample Topic Sentences

Directions:

- Circle the debatable claim.
- Underline the summary of evidence.

1. Chocolate milk should not be served in school lunches because of its high sugar content.
2. My school lunch isn't as healthy as it should be since it leaves me feeling sick and tired after I eat it.
3. People should feel free to eat chocolate on a regular basis, despite concerns about obesity in America, because consuming chocolate in moderation can have positive health effects.

You Try!

1. Now, return to your argument paragraph and summarize your evidence.
2. Add your claim to this summary of evidence using a conjunction such as "because" or "since." And that's a topic sentence!

You Try Again!

Rewrite your topic sentence so the summary of evidence is worded differently. And try a different conjunction.

Variety of Evidence Checklist

Check the box next to each kind of evidence you currently have for your argument.

<input type="checkbox"/>	FACTUAL EVIDENCE
	Confirmed facts
	Data and statistics
	Research by experts
	ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE
	Personal experience
	Friends' and family's experience
	Interviewee's or acquaintance's experience

Do you have 2 pieces of factual evidence and 1 piece of anecdotal evidence?

What kind of evidence would most improve the persuasiveness of your argument?

What specific part of your argument should this evidence concern?

Drafting Commentary Anchor Chart

Strong Commentary Verbs

from *Rules for Writers* by Diana Hacker

Use these verbs when writing commentary.

acknowledges	compares	insists	claims
adds	confirms	notes	underscores
admits	declares	observes	exemplifies
agrees	denies	points out	implies
argues	emphasizes	rejects	proves
asserts	highlights	reports	exhibits
believes	illustrates	responds	suggests

3 Commentary Questions

How would you re-explain this piece of evidence?

What is important about this piece of evidence?

How does this piece of evidence prove your claim?

