

# *Everything is an Argument: A Regional Effort To Advance Professional Learning in Argument Writing*

**NJ Writing Alliance Annual Conference: May 29, 2014**

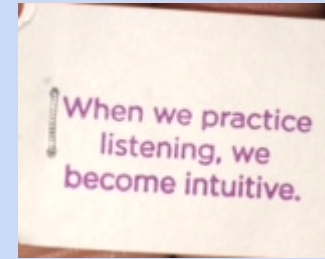
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The Quad-Districts: Allendale, Ho-Ho-Kus, Northern Highlands Regional High School, and Upper Saddle River

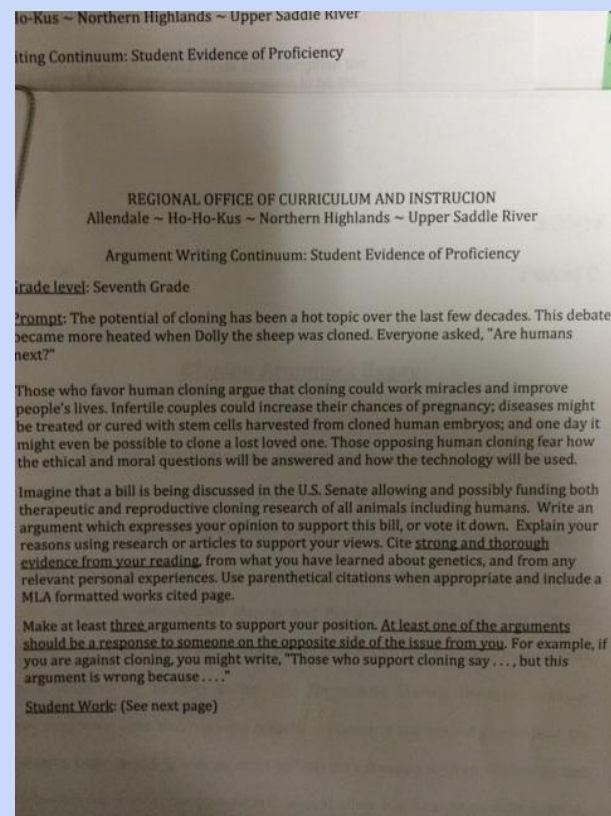
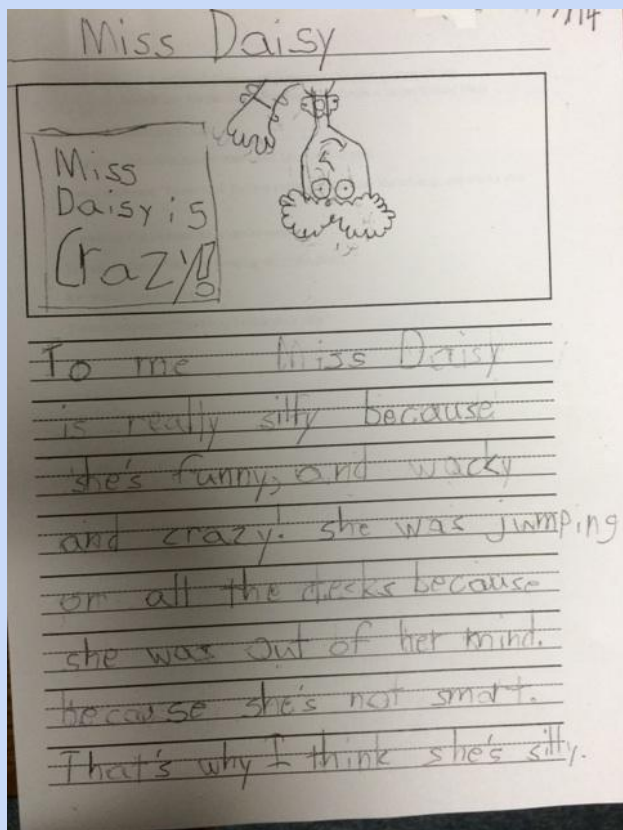
# Listening inventory: The common thread between “articulation” and “argument”?

Identify a moment from your professional life when you **opened your eyes** to a new idea.

Identify a moment from your professional life when you **shut down** after being introduced to a new idea.



How did you think and feel differently in each of these situations?



Quad-District Argument Writing Continuum: Sample #1

# K-12 Quad-District Writing Articulation Goals

- ❑ deepen educators' understanding of the three CCSS forms of writing
- ❑ enhance writing articulation between teachers at all three levels of education: elementary, middle, and high school
- ❑ provide professional development for content-area teachers and context in writing instruction

# Defining “articulation”



- ❑ professional dialogue among diverse experiences: share practices across grade level
- ❑ setting expectations: refine what “good” writing means based on conversations with colleagues
- ❑ changing curricular outcomes: establishing benchmarks and progressions that are rigorous and appropriate in writing

# Key ingredients to effective articulation

- ❑ creating a culture for professional inquiry
- ❑ K-12 teacher, administrator, literacy coach, and professional consultant representation
- ❑ collaborative planning
- ❑ professional development embedded in curriculum work
- ❑ model best practices based on research and classroom experiences
- ❑ production of meaningful curricular documents to guide instruction

# Purpose of an argument writing continuum

## Classroom

1. Mentor text for students to see a high quality piece of writing by a peer rather than the teacher or well-known published author.
2. Introduction to a new unit in which students reflect on the characteristics of effective argument writing.
3. Reference in student conferences as guide to targeted feedback students receive involving their own argument writing.

## Articulation and professional development

1. Resource for discussion between educators and administrators about qualities of effective argument writing.
2. Model of meaningful feedback including key ideas and textual evidence for exemplary writers.
3. Instrument for articulating and analyzing student learning progressions across grade levels, giving teachers concrete evidence at different grade levels.

# Everything is an argument

*Thinking as argument is implicated in all of the beliefs people hold, the judgments they make, and the conclusions they come to; it arises every time a significant decision must be made. Hence, argumentative thinking lies at the heart of what we should be concerned about in examining how, and how well, people think.*  
D. Kuhn, 1992

## AGENDA

- I. Why argue? Personal reflections
- II. How is an argument constructed? GoldiBlox commercial
- III. Keynote: Conceptualizing argument across curriculum and medium (Danahy and Siegel)
- IV. Accountable talk to practice and apply argument [Breakout session]
  - A. The Giving Tree (K-5, Siegel)
  - B. Oh Rats! (6-12, Danahy)
- LUNCH: ON YOUR OWN (11:30 - 12:30)**
- V. Multiple lenses and critical reading strategies to contextualize argument [Breakout session]
  - A. Phineas and Ferb (K-5, Danahy)
  - B. Wings (6-12, Siegel)
- VI. Constructing strong arguments across the curriculum [Breakout session]
  - A. Science (Siegel)
  - B. Social Studies (Danahy)
- VII. Summary and questions: Rethinking argument writing



# Fishbowl Activity

## Group 1: Participants

- Participants will act as students during the activity
- Take notes on the participant side of the handout
- After the video, you'll take silent notes, and when directed, discuss your responses with other participants

## Group 2: Observers

- Observers will act as teacher-researchers
- Take field notes on the observer side of the handout during the activity
- Listen and observe as participants respond to the video
- Later, you'll be asked to share your notes



# Fishbowl Activity - Write Silently

## Group 1: Participants

- Take 3 minutes to respond to the questions in writing.

## Group 2: Observers

- Take 3 minutes to begin filling in your field notes.

# Fishbowl Activity - Participants Discuss

## Group 1: Participants

- Find a participant partner (or two).  
Discuss your responses with your partner for 5 minutes.

## Group 2: Observers

- Find a pair of participants. Listen in and take notes on your observations during the their discussion.

# Fishbowl Activity - Observers Report

## Group 1: Participants

- This is your turn to listen.

## Group 2: Observers

- Share your field notes and observations with the participants. Which skills did you observe them practicing?

# Sample Responses from the Quad

## Question 1: What is the argument?

Grade 1	Girls should use their brains.
Grade 2	Girls like building cool stuff.
Grade 6	1. All girls don't like only girl stuff, but they also like boy stuff. 2. Don't underestimate girls 3. Girls want better toys, like boys have 4. Girls don't just want to be known as playing with dolls but want things to help them be smart.
Grade 10	Girls can do what boys can do; girls should pursue careers in S.T.E.M.; girls are creative; girls' toys are limiting; advocating gender equality; challenging gender norms; to empower girls; to challenge the toy industry

# Sample Responses from the Quad

## Question 2: What evidence supports the argument?

Grade 1	1- At the end, they showed Goldielocks smiling and she is the one with the Goldieblox so she must be cool since she can make all the fun stuff in the commercial. 2- All of the things that you saw in the commercial were toys you can use to make something fun.
Grade 2	The only words from the song that they recognized or understood was "girls".
Grade 6	1. The girls turned off the princess TV show. 2. The lyrics of the song talked about how they could build a spaceship and be an engineer. 3. They used all the pink and frilly toys in their Rube Goldberg.

# Sample Responses from the Quad

## Question 3: Who is the intended audience targeted in this ad?

Grade 1	Boys and Girls are the intended audience because it showed fun stuff they can build and boys and girls would like that.
Grade 4	1. girls 2. girls who don't want to have all girly things 3. parents
Grade 8	Most students listed the primary target as adults, specifically parents and guardians. A few named only girls. Most students noted both. Only a couple noticed the girls were ethnically different.
Grade 10	young girls, children, toy industry, general public, parents/guardians, consumers, feminists, sexist people



# 3 Elements of Articulation Model

- ❏ Learn about and discuss *Regional Workshops*
- ❏ Try it out with students *Classroom Application*
- ❏ Look at student work *Collaborative Assessment Discussions*

# Workshops: Learning About a Topic

- ❑ try argument writing yourself and reflect on your process
- ❑ look at examples of argument and name what you see
- ❑ look in less obvious places for elements of argument (songs, video, stories, images, ads, etc.)
- ❑ pay attention to what convinces you and name those traits
- ❑ use an argument protocol to debate

# Classroom Application: Try It Out

- ❑ read and discuss mentor texts with students
- ❑ point out where and how students use argumentation successfully in life already
- ❑ use multi-modal texts to study argument
- ❑ hold debates about topics or texts of interest
- ❑ listen for authentic arguments students are engaged with and offer space for them to write their stance

★ *keep track of what you try out with some reflective notes to share with your colleagues*

# Collaborative Assessment Discussions

When looking at student writing...

- ❑ name what you see without judgments
- ❑ name what you think the writer is approximating
- ❑ avoid jargon, while being as specific as possible
- ❑ discuss and imagine next steps
- ❑ compare pieces and name specifically what is similar and different
- ❑ create continuums with clear descriptions that outline teaching moves and ideas

# Contact Information

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