

Learning Progression for Argument Writing							
	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
STRUCTURE							
Overall	The writer told readers his opinion and ideas on a text or a topic and helped them understand his reasons.	The writer made a claim about a topic or a text and tried to support her reasons.	The writer made a claim or thesis on a topic or text, supported it with reasons, and provided a variety of evidence for each reason.	The writer explained the topic/text and staked out a position that can be supported by a variety of trustworthy sources. Each part of the text helped build her argument, and led to a conclusion.	The writer laid out a well-supported argument and made it clear that this argument is part of a bigger conversation about a topic/text. He acknowledged positions on the topic or text that might disagree with his own position, but still showed why his position makes sense.	The writer laid out an argument about a topic/text and made it clear why her particular argument is important and valid. She stayed fair to those who might disagree with her by describing how her position is one of several and making it clear where her position stands in relation to others.	The writer presented an argument, offering context, honoring other points of view, and indicating the conditions under which the position holds true. The writer developed the argument with logical reasoning and convincing evidence, acknowledging the limitations of the position and citing—and critiquing—sources.
Lead	The writer wrote a beginning in which she not only set readers up to expect that this would be a piece of opinion writing, but also tried to hook them into caring about her opinion.	The writer wrote a few sentences to hook his readers, perhaps by asking a question, explaining why the topic mattered, telling a surprising fact, or giving background information. The writer stated his claim.	The writer wrote an introduction that led to a claim or thesis and got his readers to care about his opinion. The writer got his readers to care by not only including a cool fact or jazzy question, but also by telling readers what was significant in or around the topic. The writer worked to find the precise words to state his claim; he let readers know the reasons he would develop later.	The writer wrote an introduction to interest readers and help them understand and care about a topic or text. She thought backward between the piece and the introduction to make sure that the introduction fit with the whole. Not only did the writer clearly state her claim, she also told her readers how her text would unfold.	The writer interested readers in his argument and helped them to understand the backstory behind it. He gave the backstory in a way that got readers ready to see his point. The writer made it clear to readers what his piece would argue and forecasted the parts of his argument.	After hooking her readers, the writer provided specific context for her own as well as another’s position(s), introduced her position, and oriented readers to the overall line of argument she would develop.	The writer demonstrated the significance of the argument and may have offered hints of upcoming parts of the essay. The writer presented needed background information to show the complexity of the issue. In addition to introducing the overall line of development the argument will take, the writer distinguished that argument from others.
Transitions	The writer connected his ideas and reasons with his examples using words such as <i>for example</i> and <i>because</i> . He connected one reason or example using words such as <i>also</i> and <i>another</i> .	The writer used words and phrases to glue parts of her piece together. She used phrases such as <i>for example</i> , <i>another example</i> , <i>one time</i> , and <i>for instance</i> to show when she wanted to shift from saying reasons to giving evidence and <i>in addition to</i> , <i>also</i> , and <i>another</i> to show when she wanted to make a new point.	The writer used transition words and phrases to connect evidence back to her reasons using phrases such as <i>this shows that</i> . . . The writer helped readers follow her thinking with phrases such as <i>another reason</i> and <i>the most important reason</i> . She used phrases such as <i>consequently</i> and <i>because of</i> to show what happened. The writer used words such as <i>specifically</i> and <i>in particular</i> to be more precise.	The writer used transitions to help readers understand how the different parts of his piece fit together to explain and support his argument. The writer used transitions to help connect claim(s), reasons, and evidence and to imply relationships, such as when material exemplifies, adds to, is similar to, explains, is a result of, or contrasts. The writer used transitions such as <i>for instance</i> , <i>in addition</i> , <i>one reason</i> , <i>furthermore</i> , <i>according to</i> , <i>this evidence suggests</i> , and <i>thus we can say that</i> .	The writer used transitions to link the parts of her argument. The transitions help readers follow from part to part and make it clear when she is stating a claim or counterclaim, giving a reason, or offering or analyzing evidence. These transitions include terms such as <i>the text states</i> , <i>as</i> , <i>this means</i> , <i>another reason</i> , <i>some people may say</i> , <i>but</i> , <i>nevertheless</i> , and <i>on the other hand</i> .	The writer used transitions to lead readers across parts of the text and to help them note how parts of the text relate back to earlier parts. He used phrases such as <i>now some argue</i> , <i>while this may be true</i> , <i>it is also the case that</i> , <i>despite this</i> , <i>as stated earlier</i> , <i>taken as a whole</i> , <i>this is significant because</i> , <i>the evidence points to</i> , and <i>by doing so</i> .	The writer used transitions to clarify the relationship between claims, reasons, and evidence, and help the reader follow the logic in the argument. The writer also used transitions to make clear the relationship of sources to each other and to the claim, such as <i>while it may be true that</i> , <i>nevertheless</i> , <i>there are times when/certain circumstances when</i> , and <i>others echo this idea</i> .
Ending	The writer worked on an ending, perhaps a thought or comment related to her opinion.	The writer wrote an ending for his piece in which he restated and reflected on his claim, perhaps suggesting an action or response based on what he had written.	The writer worked on a conclusion in which he connected back to and highlighted what the text was mainly about, not just the preceding paragraph.	In the conclusion, the writer restated the important points and offered a final insight or implication for readers to consider. The ending strengthened the overall argument.	In his conclusion, the writer reinforced and built on the main point(s) in a way that made the entire text a cohesive whole. The conclusion reiterated how the support for his claim outweighed the counterclaim(s), restated the main points, responded to them, or highlighted their significance.	In the conclusion, the writer described the significance of her argument for stakeholders or offered additional insights, implications, questions, or challenges.	In the concluding section, the writer may have clarified the conditions under which the position holds true, discussed possible applications or consequence, and/or offered possible solutions.
Organization	The writer wrote several reasons or examples why readers should agree with his opinion and wrote at least several sentences about each reason. The writer organized his information so that each part of his writing was mostly about one thing.	The writer separated sections of information using paragraphs.	The writer grouped information and related ideas into paragraphs. She put the parts of her writing in the order that most suited her purpose and helped her prove her reasons and claim.	The writer organized his argument into sections: he arranged reasons and evidence purposefully, leading readers from one claim or reason to another. The order of the sections and the internal structure of each section made sense.	The writer purposely arranged parts of her piece to suit her purpose and to lead readers from one claim, counterclaim, reason, or piece of evidence to another. The writer used topic sentences, transitions, and formatting (where appropriate) to clarify the structure of the piece and to highlight her main points.	The writer organized claims, counterclaims, reasons, and evidence into sections and clarified how sections are connected. The writer created an organizational structure that supports a reader’s growing understanding across the whole of his argument, arranging the sections to build on each other in a logical, compelling fashion.	The writer created a logical and compelling structure for the argument so that each part builds on a prior section, and the whole moves the reader toward understandings.

Learning Progression for Argument Writing (continued)							
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DEVELOPMENT							
Elaboration	The writer not only named her reasons to support her opinion, but also wrote more about each one.	The writer gave reasons to support his opinion. He chose the reasons to convince his readers. The writer included examples and information to support his reasons, perhaps from a text, his knowledge, or his life.	The writer gave reasons to support his opinion that were parallel and did not overlap. He put them in an order that he thought would be most convincing. The writer included evidence such as facts, examples, quotations, micro-stories, and information to support his claim. The writer discussed and unpacked the way that the evidence went with the claim.	The writer included and arranged a variety of evidence such as facts, quotations, examples, and definitions. The writer used trusted sources and information from experts and gave the sources credit. The writer worked to explain how the reasons and evidence she gave supported her claim(s) and strengthened her argument. To do this the writer referred to earlier parts of her text, summarized background information, raised questions, or highlighted possible implications.	The writer included varied kinds of evidence such as facts, quotations, examples, and definitions. He analyzed or explained the reasons and evidence, showing how they fit with his claim(s) and built his argument. The writer consistently incorporated and cited trustworthy sources. The writer wrote about another possible position or positions—a different claim or claims about this subject—and explained why the evidence for his position outweighed the counterclaim(s). The writer worked to make his argument compelling as well as understandable. He brought out why it mattered and why the audience should care about it.	The writer brought out the aspects of the argument that were most significant to her audience and to her overall purpose(s). The writer incorporated trustworthy and significant sources and explained if and when a source seemed problematic. The writer analyzed the relevance of the reasons and evidence for her claims as well as for the counterclaim(s) and helped readers understand each position. The writer made sure all of her analysis led readers to follow her line of argument.	The writer brought out the aspects of the argument that were most significant to the audience and to the purposes. When appropriate, the writer acknowledged limitations or critiques of sources—perhaps evaluating sources’ reasoning or suspect motivations. The writer angled and/or framed evidence to clearly and fairly represent various perspectives, while also maintaining a clear position.
Craft	The writer not only told readers to believe him, but also wrote in ways that got them thinking or feeling in certain ways.	The writer made deliberate word choices to convince her readers, perhaps by emphasizing or repeating words that made readers feel emotions. If it felt right to do so, the writer chose precise details and facts to help make her points and used figurative language to draw readers into her line of thought. The writer made choices about which evidence was best to include or not include to support her points. The writer used a convincing tone.	The writer made deliberate word choices to have an effect on her readers. The writer reached for the precise phrase, metaphor, or image that would convey her ideas. The writer made choices about how to angle her evidence to support her points. When it seemed right to do so, the writer tried to use a scholarly voice and varied her sentences to create the pace and tone of the different sections of her piece.	The writer chose his words carefully to support his argument and to have an effect on his reader. The writer worked to include concrete details, comparisons, and/or images to convey his ideas, build his argument, and keep his reader engaged. When necessary, the writer explained terms to readers, providing definitions, context clues or parenthetical explanations. The writer made his piece sound serious.	The writer used words purposefully to affect meaning and tone. The writer chose precise words and used metaphors, images, or comparisons to explain what she meant. The writer included domain-specific, technical vocabulary relevant to her argument and audience and defined these when appropriate. The writer used a formal tone, but varied it appropriately to engage the reader.	The writer intended to affect his reader in particular ways—to make the reader think, realize, or feel a particular way—and he chose language to do that. The writer consistently used comparisons, analogies, vivid examples, anecdotes, or other rhetorical devices to help readers follow his thinking and grasp the meaning and significance of a point or a piece of evidence. The writer varied his tone to match the different purposes of different sections of his argument.	The writer intended to make the reader think, realize, or feel a particular way—and chose language to do that. In addition to using other literary devices, the writer may have used allusions. The writer varied the tone to match the purposes of different sections of the argument, as well as to develop and overall impact.
CONVENTIONS							
Spelling	The writer used what she knew about word families and spelling rules to help her spell and edit. The writer got help from others to check her spelling and punctuation before she wrote her final draft.	The writer used what he knew about word families and spelling rules to help him spell and edit. He used the word wall and dictionaries to help him when needed.	The writer used what he knew about word patterns to spell correctly and he used references to help him spell words when needed. The writer made sure to correctly spell words that were important to his topic.	The writer used resources to be sure the words in her writing were spelled correctly, including returning to sources to check spelling.	The writer matched the spelling of technical vocabulary to that found in resources and text evidence. He spelled material in citations correctly.	The writer spelled technical vocabulary and literary vocabulary accurately. She spelled material in citations according to sources, and spelled citations accurately.	The used accurate spelling throughout, including cited text and citations.
Punctuation and Sentence Structure	The writer punctuated dialogue correctly with commas and quotation marks. While writing, the writer put punctuation at the end of every sentence. The writer wrote in ways that helped readers read with expression, reading some parts quickly, some slowly, some parts in one sort of voice and others in another.	When writing long, complex sentences, the writer used commas to make them clear and correct. The writer used periods to fix her run-on sentences.	The writer used commas to set off introductory parts of sentences (<i>At this time in history, . . .</i>). The writer used a variety of punctuation to fix any run-on sentences. The writer used punctuation to cite her sources.	The writer used punctuation such as dashes, colons, parentheses, and semicolons to help him include or connect information in some of his sentences. The writer punctuated quotes and citations accurately.	The writer varied her sentence structure, sometimes using simple and sometimes using complex sentence structure. The writer used internal punctuation appropriately within sentences and when citing sources, including commas, dashes, parentheses, colons, and semicolons.	The writer used different sentence structures to achieve different purposes throughout his argument. The writer used verb tenses that shift when needed (as in when moving from a citation back to his own writing), deciding between active and passive voice where appropriate. The writer used internal punctuation effectively, including the use of ellipses to accurately insert excerpts from sources.	The writer used sentence structure and verb tense purposefully (i.e., using fragments to emphasize key points, using present tense to create immediacy). The writer used punctuation to emphasize connections, to strengthen tone, and to clarify and add complexity.