**Letter to Parents**

Dear Parents,

Class 801 is embarking on a study of argumentation. Students will be learning to investigate a complex, real-life issue, take a position that is contextualized and nuanced, and write a principled argument that defends that position while being fair to multiple perspectives.

As students learn this work, there are a couple of ways that you could help them. One way is to be an audience for rehearsal. Your child will need lots of opportunities to rehearse their arguments—to try out their claims, to hear other perspectives, and to continually test their logic and reasoning.

Another way you can help your child is to give them an opportunity to talk about the content they are studying. The study begins with an examination of video games and role-playing games with simulated violence. Expect your child to have some passionate ideas about whether or not teenagers should be allowed to play these games! Next, we’ll move into a study of the experience of child soldiers—in particular, the question that has been much debated at the United Nations, UNICEF, and Amnesty International of amnesty for child soldiers. Students will have access to articles from the *New York Times* and CNN, and they will both want and need to talk to caring adults about what they are learning.

Ishmael Beah’s award-winning memoir, *Long Way Gone*, will be one book that students may choose to read. You might like to read it as well as it’s haunting story captures the heart of the experience of teens caught up in this struggle. Students will be hosting a book club, next Thursday, at 7 pm in our classroom. Please come, whether you’ve read the whole book or just part of it! It’s available for Kindle and at all bookstores, and I have some extra copies in my classroom if you’d like to borrow one.

Yours,

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