DEVELOPING AND STRENGTHENING
ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING

"What do I know?" - Michel de Montaigne, French essayist (1533-1592);
first to label his writing an "essay"

"For students, writing is a key means of asserting and defending claims, showing what they know about a subject, and conveying what they have experienced, imagined, thought, and felt."
[CCSS ELA/Literacy Standards, p. 41]

OBJECTIVE:	Students use a collaborative process to develop and strengthen their writing in which they use clear criteria and their close reading skills in text-centered discussions about their emerging drafts.

ACTIVITIES

MATERIALS:
Evidence-Based Writing Rubric
Connecting Ideas Handout
Organizing EBC Tool
EBA Criteria Checklist
TCD Checklist
EBA Terms

1- STRENGTHENING WRITING COLLABORATIVELY: PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES
Students learn and practice a collaborative, question-based approach to developing and improving writing, using criteria from the unit and guiding questions to begin the drafting and revision process.

2- FOCUS ON CONTENT: INFORMATION AND IDEAS
Students write, discuss, and revise with a focus on articulating their overall ideas with necessary information.

3- FOCUS ON ORGANIZATION: UNITY, COHERENCE, AND LOGICAL SEQUENCE
Students write, discuss, and revise with a focus on the unity of their initial drafts, coherence among their ideas and information, and logic of their organizational sequence.

4 - FOCUS ON SUPPORT: INTEGRATING AND CITING EVIDENCE
Students write, discuss, and revise with a focus on their selection, use, and integration of evidence.

5- FOCUS ON LINKAGES: CONNECTIONS AND TRANSITIONS
Students write, discuss, and revise with a focus on the effectiveness of the connections and transitions they have made, and their use of transitional phrases.

6- FOCUS ON LANGUAGE: CLARITY AND IMPACT
Students write, discuss, and revise with a focus on the quality and variety of their sentences, the clarity of their vocabulary, and the impact of their word choices.

7- FOCUS ON CONVENTIONS: PUNCTUTATION, GRAMMAR, AND SPELLING
Students write, discuss, and revise with a focus on the targeted aspect(s) of writing conventions.

8- FOCUS ON PUBLICATION: FINAL EDITING AND FORMATTING
Students write, discuss, and revise with a focus on producing a final quality product.

ALIGNMENT TO CCSS

TARGETED STANDARDS:
W.11-12.1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
W.11-12.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
W.11-12.5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. **W.11-12.9:** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. **SL.11-12.1:** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SUPPORTING STANDARDS:
RI.11-12.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain. **RI.11-12.5:** Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging. **RI.11-12.6:** Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness, or beauty of the text.
RI.11-12.8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning.

A COLLABORATIVE, QUESTION-BASED APPROACH TO STRENGTHENING WRITING
PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES

The Core Proficiencies collaborative, question-based approach for developing and strengthening writing is grounded in the French roots of the word "essay" – a term that can guide the way we go about writing as much as designate what we are expected to produce. "Essayer," in French, means to "attempt" or "try." As a verb, it actually means the same thing in English. To "essay" is therefore to try, or attempt. So, when we talk about an "essay" (i.e. paper, composition, etc.), we are actually talking about writing "an attempt."

This influences how we think about what we are asking students to do, and what we ourselves are doing when writing. We can see the piece of writing we are developing as never finished. This is not to say that we do not need to present an unpolished and refined work, but that ideas, theories, information, and our own understanding and perspective of the issues constantly change and evolve. An essay then is an ongoing attempt to clearly communicate something we are thinking about. That idea could result in an argument, an explanation, a narrative, a description, a speech, etc. The motivation, purpose, and audience can change; however, our attempt to gain and present a clear understanding of a specific subject never changes. We may not get there, but we work to get progressively closer, viewing writing, thinking and understanding of a particular topic as a continual work in progress.

If a paper (or idea) is never fully finished, if it is just the next step, then writing an "essay" benefits greatly from a collaborative, question-based process. To think of an "essay" as a process rather than a product suggests that conversation, contemplation, consideration, and revision are all part of the "attempts" to get one's thinking down on paper so that others can understand and respond to it.

The Core Proficiencies approach to developing and strengthening writing recognizes the iterative nature of an "essay," while also acknowledging the need to ground the writing process in clear criteria in order to produce a final, polished product. There are many such processes that have been well described in the literature on writing, and many teachers have their own, favored approach to teaching what has become known as "the writing process." If so, teachers are encouraged to follow what works for them and their students – adding what makes sense from the approaches and activities described here.

LEARNING PRINCIPLES

Central to the Core Proficiencies approach to facilitating the development of student writing are the following working principles:

- **Independence:** Students need to discover and adopt <u>personally effective writing processes</u> to develop their own essays, to become reflective and independent writers who persevere and grow through their attempts, rather than learning and following "*the* writing process" in a rote and mechanical way. Thus, the Core Proficiencies approach to writing and revising is iterative, flexible, and student-driven.

- **Collaboration:** Becoming an independent writer also entails learning to seek and use <u>constructive feedback from others</u> – peers, teachers, audience members – which implies that students develop and value the skills of thoughtful collaboration. Thus, the Core Proficiencies writing classroom relies on text-centered discussions of students' essays.

A COLLABORATIVE, QUESTION-BASED APPROACH TO STRENGTHENING WRITING: PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES

- **Clear Criteria:** <u>Clear, commonly understood criteria</u> that describe the essential characteristics of a desired writing product can help students both understand what they are trying to accomplish and participate in focused, criterion-based reviews of their own and their peers' writing. Thus the criteria that drive reflection and conversation in a Core Proficiencies writing classroom focus on critical characteristics of a piece of writing (e.g., the nature of a central claim and its support within an argument) rather than merely on mechanical issues (e.g., the number of sources used to support the argument, or the number of spelling errors).

- **Guiding Questions:** In addition to being based in clear criteria, student processes for developing and reviewing their writing should call on their evolving skills as readers, using <u>guiding and text-based questions</u> to promote "close reading" of their developing drafts. Thus, in a Core Proficiencies writing classroom, students are expected to frame text-based "review questions" before asking a teacher or peer to read an emerging draft.

- **Evidence:** Whether driven by criteria or questions, student conversations and reflections about their writing should be based on <u>specific textual evidence</u>, which they or their reviewers cite when they are discussing both the strengths of a piece of writing and the areas in which it might be improved. Thus, the review process in a Core Proficiencies writing classroom involves making evidence-based "claims" about a piece of writing.

LEARNING PROCESSES

To make these principles come alive, learning activities in a Core Proficiencies writing classroom are designed and sequenced to provide time and support for the "essay" process. Each stage of the process therefore includes the following components:

- **Teacher Modeling:** Each writing activity includes a teacher demonstration lesson, in which the teacher focuses on and models a specific aspect of writing, specific criteria and guiding question(s), and/or an approach to writing/reviewing that will be emphasized in that phase of the process.

- **Guided and Supported Writing:** The bulk of classroom time is dedicated for students to "essay" – to free-write, experiment, draft, revise, and/or polish their writing, depending on where they are in the process, and guided by what has been introduced and modeled in the demonstration lesson.

- **Text-Centered Discussion:** As students write, they are also engaged in ongoing discussions about their writing – sometimes in formal or informal sessions with the teacher, sometimes in structured peer reviews, and sometimes in more spontaneous conversations with a partner. At the center of all discussions are the fundamental principles of: 1) using <u>Guiding or Text-based Questions</u> to examine the writing; 2) applying <u>Clear Criteria</u> when determining and discussing its strengths and weaknesses; and 3) citing <u>Specific Evidence</u> in response to questions and/or in support of claims about the writing.

- **Read Alouds:** Periodically, students have opportunities to publicly share their emerging writing, reading segments to the class (or a small group), and using questions, criteria, and evidence to discuss what they are noticing (and working on) in their own writing.

As practiced in conjunction with a Core Proficiency unit, such as *Developing Evidence- Based Arguments*, the process is sequenced as a series of "attempts" that are intended to produce a specific written product (an argument, explanation, or narrative) that also represents evidence of a student's reading and research skills.

LEARNING PROGRESSION

Thus the approach emphasizes criteria that describe an effective final product and the skills it should demonstrate, questions that are intended to improve the product, and the use of the process to progressively revise and refine a piece of writing. As such, the process moves like a camera lens through an iterative, progressively more focused sequence of activities, including:

1. A broad scanning of the landscape in the initial stages of the "essay" – <u>turning thinking into writing and/or writing one's way to thinking</u>.

2. An initial, wide-angle view/review of the "big picture" – the thinking behind the writing and the <u>ideas and information</u> it presents (with the idea that until the thinking is clear and well-developed, other revisions are premature).

3. A still broad but somewhat more focused emphasis on <u>organizing, re-organizing, and/or re-sequencing</u> into a logical progression of thinking.

4. A more zoomed-in look at the <u>use and integration of supporting evidence</u>, either through references, quotations, or paraphrasing.

5. A focus on <u>linking ideas</u> – on connecting and transitioning among sentences and paragraphs.

6. Attention to <u>how ideas are expressed</u> – to the writer's choices regarding sentence structure/variety and language use.

7. A final zoom-in for <u>editing and proofing</u>, with an emphasis on particular <u>language conventions</u> and formatting issues related to the specific writing product.

8. A framing of the <u>finished product</u> so that it effectively communicates for its specified audience and purpose.

Teachers and students can follow this entire progression of writing activities, or chose to emphasize those that are most appropriate for a particular writing assignment and/or a group of students.

Recommended Resource: One of the finest and most helpful resources to support writers as they work to develop and strengthen their writing, and teachers as they facilitate the learning process, is John R. Trimble's *Writing with Style: Conversations on the Art of Writing* [Longman, 2010; ISBN-13: 978-0205028801]. Trimble begins by discussing the critical importance of "Thinking Well" and of both "selling and serving" one's reader, and moves from there to concrete tips about writing, revision, and editing. Trimble's central premise is that effective writers "have accepted the grim reality that nine tenths of all writing is rewriting…" [p.9]. Trimble's ideas will occasionally be referenced in the unit's activity sequence, and can provide a valuable supplement to the brief discussions of effective writing presented here. Here are his "four essentials" [p.6]:

1. Have something to say that's worth a reader's attention.

2. Be sold on its validity and importance yourself so you can pitch it with conviction.

3. Furnish strong arguments that are well supported with concrete proof.

4. Use confident language – vigorous verbs, strong nouns, and assertive phrasing.

ACTIVITY 1: STRENGTHENING WRITING COLLABORATIVELY- PRINCIPLES AND PROCESSES

Students learn and practice a collaborative, question-based approach to developing and improving writing, using criteria from the unit and guiding questions to begin the drafting and revision process.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

"I speak to the paper, as I speak to the first person I meet." – Montaigne

In this first activity, students learn about the collaborative, question-based approach to developing and improving writing, and initially practice that approach in the context of "talking out" a first draft. Establishing the culture and routines that accompany this approach will take some time, if they have not previously been part of students' writing classroom experiences. Thus each of the activities in the sequence address the four components described earlier (Modeling, Guided Writing, Text-Centered Discussion, Read Aloud), following the format and model established in this first activity set. As students experience each phase of the activity, explain the purpose and focus of each of these components as students begin work to develop and strengthen their writing.

Teacher Modeling: Because students may begin their first draft from different places of readiness and resources, model (or at least discuss) several possible approaches to drafting, i.e.:

• Working from Previous Thinking and Planning: In Part IV, Activity 5, students have used the tools to frame and review an initial plan for their argument that included: their written EBC about the nature of the problem, their position, their logical approach and line of reasoning, the premises/claims that formed the building blocks of their argument, and the evidence they might use to substantiate those claims. Students will also have completed a series of tools and written claims about various arguments they have read. Model how one might use these materials to talk out a first draft as guided and organized by these resources and this emerging plan or outline. [Note: this approach may work best for students who know what they want to argue, have been able to plan a structure for their argument, and/or are most comfortable writing from a pre-existing plan.]

• Working from a Previously Written Paragraph(s): Throughout Parts I-IV, students will have composed paragraphs which present and support claims about the nature of the problem and various arguments written in response to it. One or more of these paragraphs may be a starting point around which to build their argument. Using either a teacher or student example paragraph, model how one can take an existing draft paragraph and either write from it or expand it to produce a more fleshed-out, multi-point argument. [Note: this approach may work best for students who are very happy with something they have already written, or who have trouble getting started and putting words to paper but are more comfortable moving forward once they are started.]

• Writing to Discover or Clarify Thinking: Some students may have moved through Parts I-IV with many thoughts in their head about the topic and what they have been reading, but may still be unclear about exactly what position they want to take or how they might argue for it. For these students, model how a less formal "free-write" around the topic – and various questions or ideas that have arisen during the unit - might help them get their thinking out on paper and then discuss it with others. Emphasize that they are "writing their way" to an emergent understanding and sense of direction. [Note: this approach may work best for students who are still uncertain how they feel about the topic/problem or who have difficulty writing a "thesis" and developing an outline prior to writing.]

No matter what approach to drafting students follow, remind them that they are trying to (in Montaigne's words) "Speak to the paper," to work out their thinking so that other's can examine it – and to follow Trimble's essential advice to "Have something to say that's worth a reader's attention."

Guided and Supported Writing: In this first phase of the writing process, students should focus on less formal, more fluid writing, trying first to get their ideas out on paper so that they and others can examine them. Students should be given adequate time and opportunity to write in class, and be expected to produce something "on demand" that can be reviewed by others. They may be taking very different

approaches to talking out their first drafts, but should be able to explain to others what they are doing and why.

- Guiding Question: Present students with a general question to think about as they begin to talk out their initial drafts, and model how that question might relate to any of the three approaches to talking out a draft. Use a question that prompts reflection, such as:

  What do I know and think about this topic/problem

  How can I help others understand my thinking?

Text-Centered Discussion: As students write, they may also begin to "check in" informally with others - both the teacher and peers.

- Initially, they might simply communicate what their approach to generating a first draft is, and why.

- As their drafts begin to emerge, conversations can be organized by the Guiding Questions: *What do I know and think about this topic/problem? What am I doing to help others understand my thinking?*

- When most students have gotten a first draft out on paper, organize them into review pairs for their first, modeled "close reading" session. For this reading, students will use a familiar process, to examine their partner's emerging argument a first time. For this session, explain and model the following guidelines:

  ◊ Reading partners initially listen to each draft as it is read aloud by the writer.

  ◊ Partners then exchange papers with no additional discussion of what they have written.

  ◊ Readers analyze the draft, looking especially for textual evidence that expresses the writer's understanding of the *issue*, *perspective*, and *position*. Readers do not evaluate or make suggestions for improvement at this stage.

◊ Readers share their analyses with writers, striving to be non-evaluative and *specific, constructive,* and *text-based* in their observations. (Model observations that either meet or do not meet these criteria for a good response, which will become even more important in later activities.)

◊ Writers practice avoiding "yes, but…" responses when receiving feedback – whereby they need to: 1) listen fully to what their reader has observed; 2) wait momentarily before responding verbally; 3) avoid explanations/ justifications for what they have done in their writing (e.g., "yes, but I explained my position here…"); and 4) frame instead an informal, text-based question to further probe their reading partner's observations. This is the routine they will be using throughout all text-centered reviews, and should be modeled and practiced here.

- Based on their partners' observations and responses to text-based questions, writers determine what they want to continue to work on as they revisit their initial drafts, and return to in-class writing, to the "essay" process.

- Throughout the process, circulate in the room and ask students to share their observations, questions, and reflections with you. Provide feedback and guidance where necessary.

Read Alouds: In this initial activity, these occur informally, in pairs, at the start of text-centered discussions.

ACTIVITY 2: FOCUS ON CONTENT-INFORMATION AND IDEAS

The teacher models a demonstration lesson that focuses on content and the unit's criteria for information and ideas. Students write, discuss, and revise with a focus on articulating their overall ideas with necessary information.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

"The most fruitful and natural exercise for our minds is, in my opinion, conversation." – Montaigne

In this classroom writing activity (and all subsequent activity sequences), the same general process and procedures are followed – in this case to support students as they continue to initially draft, or re-draft, an argument that will eventually serve as their final product and summative assessment in the unit. In Activity 1, students have focused on getting their ideas and information on paper, and listening as a reader analyzes what their draft communicates about their understanding, perspective, and position. Students will begin this activity with a new, criteria- and question-based, text-centered discussion that more formally helps them examine and think about the content of their emerging drafts.

Remind them that they will be engaged in thoughtful conversations, to Montaigne "the most fruitful and natural exercise of our minds," and that they will be using those conversations to address Trimble's second essential for an effective written argument, to "Be sold on its validity and importance yourself so you can pitch it with conviction."

Teacher Modeling: The demonstration lesson focuses on the unit's criteria for Content and Analysis, and how to use those criteria to develop and strengthen a piece of writing. Begin the demonstration lesson by clarifying what the overall writing task is, what the final product will be, and a general timeline for generating, improving, and finalizing that product. Review the *Evidence-Based Arguments Criteria Checklist* to clarify that students' final products will be analyzed and evaluated in terms of a set of criteria that describe:

I. Content and Analysis
II. Evidence and Reasoning
III. Coherence and Organization
IV. Control of Language and Conventions

- Introduce a general Guiding Review Question related to the overall content of the writing, and the criteria, i.e.: *What is the writer's central position, and how does it reflect an understanding of the problem?*

- Provide students with a draft paragraph that represents a skeletal or emerging argument (either teacher-developed or taken from an anonymous student) and read the paragraph aloud.

- In review teams, have students re-read the draft paragraph in light of the general Guiding Question. Student teams then share text-based responses to the question with the class, as if the teacher is the paragraph's author.

- Focus students' attention on the three criteria for Content and Analysis: Clarity and Relevance; Understanding of the Issue; and Acknowledgement of Other Perspectives. Explain/model/discuss what each of these criteria cause one to think about, based on previous work in this and other Core Proficiency units.

- Read closely and study the specific language of one of the *Evidence-Based Arguments Checklist* Criteria such as:

> **Clarity and Relevance:** Purposefully states a precise position that is linked to a clearly identified context (topic, problem, issue) that establishes its relevance.

- Model/discuss what specific language in the criterion statement might mean within an argument, e.g., what does it mean to "purposefully state a precise position," that "is linked to a clearly identified context," and that "establishes its relevance."

- With the review criterion as a focus, frame one or more text-based question(s) that you might pose to a reviewer who was going to give you specific feedback about the draft paragraph.

  ◊ Text-based Review Question(s): *Is my position "purposefully stated"? In sentences 3-5, what helps you as a reader understand its relationship to "an identified context"? What might I add (or revise) to help establish the relevance of my position?*

- Students (individually or in review teams) now read the paragraph closely, considering the text-based review questions and generating a reviewer's response.

ODELL EDUCATION

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES (CONT'D)

- Discuss how a text-based response to a draft piece of writing is a kind of "claim" that the reviewer makes based on the criteria, question(s), and specific textual evidence.

- Model how you might frame a claim-based response if you were a reviewer of the draft paragraph, emphasizing:

   ◊ A *specific* response that emphasizes both a strength of the paragraph and a potential improvement.

   ◊ A *constructive* and respectful articulation of the response.

   ◊ *Text-based evidence* in the paragraph that has led to and supports your response.

- Guided by this model, students articulate and share their text-based responses and constructive reviewer claims, as if their partners were now the writer of the draft paragraph. Have several students volunteer to present their responses to the whole class, and discuss how the responses are (or are not) *specific, constructive, and text-based.*

- Model the writer's behaviors introduced and practiced in Activity 1: 1) listen fully to what readers have observed; 2) wait momentarily before responding verbally; 3) avoid explanations/justifications for what you as a writer have tried to do (no "yes, but…" responses); and 4) frame instead additional informal, text-based questions to further probe your readers' observations.

- Discuss what you might do as a writer after considering the responses you have gotten to your text-based review questions.

Text-Centered Discussion: Before continuing the drafting process, students will engage in their first criterion- and question-based review. This initial review team conference is structured and facilitated by the teacher based on the modeling and practice just completed with the draft paragraph. Discussions follow this protocol:

   1. Each discussion begins with the general Guiding Review Question and the Criteria being focused upon.

2. The student whose work is being reviewed then poses a specific Text-based Review Question to guide the reading and review. Reviewers can probe this question to clarify what specifically the writer "wants to know" about his or her draft.

3. The close reading and review of the draft (or section of draft) then focuses on discussing specific responses to the question, making and sharing reviewers' claims, and citing specific Textual Evidence from the draft as support for claims about the writing's overall strengths in terms of ideas and content, and about possible areas for improvement of its thinking and the explanation of that thinking.

- With a reading partner, students engage in and practice this protocol using their emerging draft arguments previously analyzed in Activity 1. Students first frame and share their specific Text-based Review Question. Reading partners read and review the draft, using the question to drive their close reading and search for specific textual evidence. In response to the question, reviewers then share observations and (potentially, if students are ready to do so) suggestions for improvement.

- Writers practice exhibiting the behaviors of a constructive text-centered discussion: 1) listen fully to what their reader has observed; 2) wait momentarily before responding verbally; 3) avoid explanations/justifications for what they have done in their writing (e.g., "yes, but I explained my position here…"); and 4) frame instead an additional, text-based question(s) to further probe their reading partner's observations.

Guided and Supported Writing: Students will be working to further develop and strengthen their initial draft of their final product, focusing on the overall criteria for Content and Analysis and the feedback they have gotten from reviewers.

- Based on constructive feedback from their readers, students frame a direction and strategy for what they want to work on to improve the Content and Analysis of their arguments.

⚏ ACTIVITY 2: FOCUS ON CONTENT- INFORMATION AND IDEAS (CONT'D)

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES (CONT'D)

- Students work on all or parts of their writing in light of this direction and strategy.

- Informal conferences – either with the teacher or other students – can occur throughout this writing time, with check-ins about what the writer is working on and how it is going.

Read Alouds: Periodically, students might share emerging sections of their drafts, talking about what they are working on in terms of questions and criteria. As some students complete their initial drafts, they might simply read what they have so that students who are not yet finished get a chance to hear what a completed and strengthened first draft might sound like.

⚏ ACTIVITY 3: FOCUS ON ORGANIZATION- UNITY, COHERENCE, AND LOGICAL SEQUENCE

The teacher models a demonstration lesson that focuses on organizing ideas and the unit's criteria for organization within the specified writing genre. Students write, discuss, and revise with a focus on the unity of their initial drafts, coherence among their ideas and information, and logic of their organizational sequence.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

"He who establishes his argument by noise and command, shows that his reason is weak." - Montaigne

This activity in the sequence emphasizes issues related to the overall line of reasoning, organization, and unity of the argument. Criteria to be considered in developing and strengthening the writing are drawn from Section III (Coherence and Organization) of the *Evidence-Based Arguments Criteria Checklist*. The learning activity sequence includes the four components of the Core Proficiencies model, as explained and guided in Activities 1 and 2. For this activity, the Text-centered Review Discussions may occur either before or during the Guided Writing phase.

Teacher Modeling: The demonstration lesson focuses on the unit's criteria for Coherence and Organization (Section III of the *Evidence-Based Arguments Criteria Checklist*) and also a criterion from Section II, Command of Evidence. Begin the lesson with a close reading and discussion of the overall descriptor for Coherence and Organization: "*An EBA organizes supported premises in a unified and logical way that clearly expresses the validity of the position.*"

- To examine the unity, coherence and logic of an argument's line of reasoning, students can benefit from studying their writing drafts in a "skeletal" form. Model how they might do this with either a

teacher-developed or anonymous student draft (or even a text from the unit's reading). With a highlighter, shade the key sentences of the argument – those that establish its position and each of the premises presented in support of that position – often, but not always, the "topic" sentences. [Alternately, you might just extract these sentences into a separate document or use *Delineating Arguments* or *Organizing EBC* tools.]

- Read the skeletal sentences aloud, with students following. Present students with the Guiding Question and focal criteria (see below). Ask them to re-read the skeletal text and offer observations directly connected to the question and criteria, and to specific evidence from the draft. Based on these observations, model how you might determine a strategy for re-thinking or revising the draft's organization, and a specific text-based review question to guide your work in developing and strengthening the draft - and your readers' review of that draft.

Text-Centered Discussion: Text-centered review discussions will likely happen at the start of the writing/ revising phase of the activity, and again, less formally, with both the teacher and peers, during writing time. Students should begin by "extracting" their skeletal argument (either through highlighting or cutting and

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES (CONT'D)

pasting) so that readers can focus on the line of reasoning. Before asking a reader to review a draft, students should formulate their own text-based review questions to direct close reading and evidence-based feedback.

- **Guiding Question:** *What is the organizational pattern (line of reasoning) used by the writer in this argument?*

- **Criteria:** Focus reading, review, and writing on any or all of these criteria from the *Evidence-Based Arguments Criteria Checklist.*

> **Reasoning:** Links evidence and claims/premises together logically in ways that lead to the conclusions expressed in the position.

> **Relationships among Parts:** Establishes clear and logical relationships among the position, claims/premises and supporting evidence.

> **Effectiveness of Structure:** Adopts an organizational strategy, including an introduction and conclusion, which clearly and compellingly communicates the argument.

- **Example Text-based Review Question(s):** *Does my chain of reasoning make sense as a way of demonstrating my position? Is it unified into a coherent argument? How might I rethink, re-sequence, or reorganize my four premises to improve the clarity or logic of my argument?*

Guided and Supported Writing: Students will be working to improve the overall line of reasoning and organization of their draft arguments. This may entail re-sequencing their premises, adding additional premises, deleting sections that take the argument off course, or adopting a different organizational plan. In classroom conferences, remind them to focus less at this point on specific issues of expression or conventions, and more on their overall line of thinking from introduction to conclusion.

Read Alouds: Periodically, students might read their skeletal arguments aloud and share what they are doing (have done) to improve organization and their line of reasoning.

ACTIVITY 4: FOCUS ON SUPPORT- INTEGRATING AND CITING EVIDENCE

The teacher models a demonstration lesson that focuses on supporting ideas and the unit's criteria for using and citing evidence. Students write, discuss, and revise with a focus on their selection, use, and integration of evidence.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

"I quote others only to better express myself." – Montaigne

Teacher Modeling: The demonstration lesson focuses on the unit's criteria for use of supporting evidence (Section II. Command of Evidence) and also a criterion related to Coherence and Organization. Begin the lesson with a close reading and discussion of the overall descriptor for Command of Evidence: *An EBA is supported by sufficient evidence and developed through valid reasoning.*

Remind students that supporting evidence may be integrated into an argument through references to other texts or information, citing of data, direct quotations, or paraphrasing. Emphasize also Trimble's reminder that "strong arguments" require "concrete proof" and Montaigne's suggestion that we "quote others only to better express" ourselves – that we do not merely insert quotations, but rather select and use them thoughtfully to develop or support our own ideas.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES (CONT'D)

Select a single draft paragraph (one with a highlighted premise from Activity 3) to use in modeling. With a second color highlighter (or with underlining or a symbol system), annotate the paragraph to indicate the evidence that is presented to support the premise. Have students read the paragraph, using the Guiding Question to make observations about the use of evidence. Introduce one or more of the criteria and discuss how you might use those criteria to review and rethink the use of evidence in the paragraph, including discussing where evidence might need to be reconsidered that may not be relevant or credible and/or where new evidence might be added to better support the premise's claim.

Text-Centered Discussion: As in the demonstration lesson, students might begin reviewing and revising a single paragraph of their drafts, to develop their thinking and practice their skills. The writing phase of the activity might begin with a short text-centered discussion using the Guiding Question and one or more criteria to get a sense of issues in the paragraph's use of evidence. Based on this first review, students frame a specific text-based review question and set a direction for revision. As students revise paragraphs, they can discuss with the teacher and peers, using the text-based review question to guide close reading, discussion, and feedback.

Guiding Question: *What sort of evidence has the writer used to support the premise/claim? (Data? References? Quotations? Paraphrasing?)*

Criteria: Focus reading, review, and writing on any or all of these criteria from the *Evidence-Based Arguments Criteria Checklist.*

- **Example Text-based Review Question(s):**
  Is my evidence clearly presented? Relevant? Credible? Sufficient? How might I better integrate the evidence in sentences 4 and 5 with the overall discussion? Should I quote or paraphrase?

Guided and Supported Writing: Students will be working to strengthen their use of evidence, which may entail rethinking the evidence itself, inserting new evidence, or reconsidering how they have presented and integrated the evidence into their paragraphs. The guided writing process will be iterative, with students potentially working through several cycles with a single paragraph, then moving on to other sections of their drafts.

Read Alouds: Periodically, students might share single paragraphs they are working on, reading them aloud and then discussing what they have come to think about their use and integration of supporting evidence.

Use of Evidence: Supports each claim/premise with valid inferences based on credible evidence.

Thoroughness and Objectivity: Represents a comprehensive understanding of the issue where the argument's claims/premises and supporting evidence fairly addresses relevant counterclaims and discusses conflicting evidence. *(addressing counterclaims is not a CCSS requirement at 6th grade)*

Relationships among Parts: Establishes clear and logical relationships among the position, claims/premises and supporting evidence.

Responsible Use of Evidence: Cites evidence in a responsible manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases. Quotes sufficient evidence exactly, or paraphrase accurately, referencing precisely where the evidence can be found.

ACTIVITY 5: FOCUS ON LINKAGES– CONNECTIONS AND TRANSITIONS

The teacher models a demonstration lesson that focuses on linkages among ideas, sentences and paragraphs. Students write, discuss, and revise with a focus on the effectiveness of the connections and transitions they have made, and their use of transitional phrases.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

"There are no truths, only moments of clarity passing for answers." – Montaigne

Introduce the idea of connections and transitions. A basic criteria can be whether a reader can read from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph without running into a disconcerting bump or jump in the flow of the writing.

The *Connecting Ideas* handout can be used to focus students on specific transitional words and ways to link ideas through syntax (e.g., using parallel structure).

Teacher Modeling: The demonstration lesson focuses on making effective linkages among sentences and paragraphs. Once the overall organizational pattern of the argument has been strengthened in Activity 3 and its integration of evidence has been worked on in Activity 4, students may be ready to focus more specifically on making smooth connections and transitions.

Select several examples from anonymous students that could use improvement in their linking of ideas – first a single paragraph (to focus on sentence connections) and then multi-paragraph (to focus on paragraph transitions). Read the drafts aloud and have students listen for places where they get lost or detect a jump or bump in flow (you might have students stand up or raise their hands to indicate when they detect an uncomfortable linkage). Using the *Connecting Ideas* handout, introduce/review the ways word and syntax can be used to repair "bumps in the road" and "build bridges among ideas." Have students suggest ways to improve the example drafts.

Text-Centered Discussion: Students will read/review each others' drafts looking for places where they detect a jump, bump, or unclear linkage. They might use a symbol system to indicate such places on the draft.

- **Guiding Question:** *Where might a reader get lost, feel an uncomfortable jump in the flow of the writing, or misunderstand the linkage among ideas?*

- **Criteria:** Focus reading, review, and writing on criteria related to connections and transitions among ideas (identified by the teacher).

- **Example Text-based Review Question(s):** *In paragraph 3, I want to link several pieces of evidence from different sources; how might I better indicate their connections? Between paragraphs 4 and 5, I transition from a supporting premise to a counterargument; how might I make a better transition to indicate this shift in reasoning?*

Guided and Supported Writing: Students will be doing "close reading" and "close writing" to work on specific spots in their drafts where the linkages are unclear or need strengthening. They will likely benefit from ongoing conferencing, so that they are aware of readers' experiences with their draft.

Read Alouds: Periodically, students might read and share two, linked paragraphs they have revised to improve either the connections among sentences or the transitions among paragraphs.

ACTIVITY 6: FOCUS ON LANGUAGE- CLARITY AND IMPACT

The teacher models a demonstration lesson that focuses on language and the unit's criteria for expression and word choice. Students write, discuss, and revise with a focus on the quality and variety of their sentences, the clarity of their vocabulary, and the impact of their word choices.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

"No-one is exempt from speaking nonsense – the only misfortune is to do it solemnly." – Montaigne

Teacher Modeling: The demonstration lesson(s) focus on the unit's criteria for <u>Control of Language</u>, with a goal that students will work to make their writing both clear and confident. Students will work on sentence structure and word choice with demonstration lessons tailored to the specific demands of the writing assignment, issues related to its audience, and/or their particular needs as writers. Some possible areas for teacher modeling and student workshop focus are:

Clarity of syntax and diction: Model how a reader can detect unclear sentences and imprecise or confusing word choices, what John Trimble delightfully refers to as "mumbo jumbo – grunts of the mind." Using an example paragraph, demonstrate how a writer might revise its sentences in response to various detected problems of clarity to, in Trimble's words, "Phrase your thoughts clearly so you're easy to follow." [p. 8] Model how student writers might frame text-based questions for their readers to respond to in text-centered review discussions.

Impact of language: Model how language use – word choices, descriptive and figurative language – can strongly influence the impact of an argument on its reader. Emphasize that a writer makes choices about how to express ideas, and that those choices should reflect what Trimble refers to as "confident language." Focus, for example, on "vigorous verbs," modeling how students might highlight all the verbs in one or more of their paragraphs (a short grammar review may be necessary!) and then study, with a reader, how those verbs either contribute to or detract from the impact and confidence of the writing. Model also, how this criterion of "vigor" in verb choices might be used in students' text-centered review discussions.

Tone: Model the importance of achieving the right tone in an argument by first returning to several of the texts read in the unit, to discuss the tone (and thus perspective) established by their language choices. Be clear about the appropriate tone for the intended writing product, while also emphasizing that trying to "lecture" one's audience in an argument rarely works. Reference Trimble's suggestion about how to "serve your reader's needs": "Talk to them in a warm, open manner instead of pontificating to them like a know-it-all." [p. 8] Have students classify arguments they have read as to whether they, as readers, have felt "talked to" or "pontificated to," in preparation for students' text-centered review discussions that focus on this distinction.

Text-Centered Discussion:

- **Guiding Question:** The general Guiding Question(s) will be determined by the focus of the demonstration lesson(s) and the review, i.e.: *How easy is it to follow the writer's thinking? Where do you get lost?"* Or *"In what ways does the writer use 'confident language' to present the argument?"* Or *"In what ways does the author express the argument in an effective, conversational tone?"*

- **Criteria:** Focus reading, review, and writing on any of the issues discussed in the modeling section, and/or either or both of these criteria from the *Evidence-Based Arguments Criteria Checklist.*

Clarity of Communication: Is communicated clearly and coherently. The writer's opinions are clearly distinguished from objective summaries and statements.

Word Choice/Vocabulary: Uses topic specific terminology appropriately and precisely.

Style/Voice: Maintains a formal and objective tone appropriate to an intended audience. The use of words, phrases, clauses, and varied syntax draws attention to key ideas and reinforces relationships among ideas.

ACTIVITY 6: FOCUS ON LANGUAGE-CLARITY AND IMPACT (CONT'D)

- **Example Text-based Review Question(s):** *In what specific places does a reader feel confused by the writing? In my final paragraph, how confidently and vigorously do I express my ideas and thus bring my argument to a forceful conclusion?*

Guided and Supported Writing: Students will work to improve specific sentence structure and word choice issues focused on in demonstration lessons and text-centered discussions. Writing time might be divided into several phases, to progressively look at a specific issue (e.g., clarity) before moving to others. Writing and text-centered discussion might thus occur in an ongoing cycle, depending on how many aspects of expression are to be addressed.

Read Alouds: Students will benefit from reading sections of their draft aloud, to a partner or the class, throughout the process, listening (as they read) for places in which they detect such things as lack of clarity, lack of confidence, and/or pontification.

ACTIVITY 7: FOCUS ON CONVENTIONS-PUNCTUTATION, GRAMMAR, AND SPELLING

The teacher models a demonstration lesson that focuses on one or more pertinent aspects of writing conventions and the unit's criteria. Students write, discuss, and revise with a focus on the targeted aspect(s) of writing conventions.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

"The greater part of the world's troubles are due to questions of grammar." – Montaigne

Teacher Modeling: The demonstration lesson(s) should focus on whatever aspects of writing conventions seem appropriate, based on: 1) the nature of the written product, and issues that typically arise; 2) students' past writing, and areas in which they have demonstrated a need to improve; 3) aspects of grammar, punctuation, or spelling that have recently been the focus of direct instruction and guided practice. Deciding which of many issues to emphasize is left up to the teacher. However, it is recommended that only a few issues be the focus of any writing cycle, so that students can really concentrate on them instead of being overwhelmed by too many "corrections" that they need to make.

Text-Centered Discussion:

Guiding Question: Based on whatever issues in grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc. are emphasized in demonstration lessons and editing processes.

Criteria: Focus reading, review, and writing on criteria specific to the targeted aspect of grammar, punctuation, or spelling, and overall to this criterion from the *Evidence-Based Arguments Criteria Checklist*.

> **Conventions of Writing:** Illustrates consistent command of standard, grade-level-appropriate writing conventions.

Example Text-based Review Question(s): Will be based on whatever issues in grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc. are emphasized in demonstration lessons and editing processes.

Guided and Supported Writing: Based on whatever issues in grammar, punctuation, spelling, etc. are emphasized in demonstration lessons and editing processes.

Read Alouds: When working on punctuation, students can benefit from read alouds in which they consciously read the indicated punctuation, i.e., pause based on the "road signs" indicated by various punctuation marks. This can help students detect place where additional punctuation may be needed, or where punctuation creates confusion.

≡ ACTIVITY 8: FOCUS ON PUBLICATION- FINAL EDITING AND FORMATTING

The teacher models a demonstration lesson that focuses on final editing and formatting and the unit's criteria for final writing products. Students write, discuss, and revise with a focus on producing a final quality product appropriate for their audience and purpose.

INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES

"There is no conversation more boring than the one where everybody agrees." - Montaigne

"I put forward formless and unresolved notions, as do those who publish doubtful questions to debate in the schools, not to establish the truth but to seek it." – Montaigne

Teacher Modeling: The demonstration lesson focuses on issues to address, and ways to achieve a quality product, when formatting a final draft for "publication" and use with an identified audience. Decisions about what to focus on are left to the teacher, based on the nature of the assignment and the opportunities to use technology to enhance the argument through graphics and document formatting.

Guided and Supported Writing: Students will finalize their written product. This may occur in class, in a computer lab, or outside of school, depending on circumstances.

Text-Centered Discussion: When/if review discussions occur, they should focus on both the correctness and impact of the final written format.

Read Alouds: Students will have spent significant time reading, thinking, and writing to produce their final written argument. A strong way to culminate and celebrate this work is through some sort of public or technology-based presentation: speeches/readings for community members, an in-class symposium on the issue, presentations to other students, or some form of argument-supported debate. The decision of how to best finish the unit in a meaningful way is left to the teacher.

≡ ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Students submit their revised essays ready for publication. Teachers can evaluate the essays using the *Evidence-Based Arguments Criteria Checklist*. The *Evidence-Based Writing Rubric* can also provide guidance on proficiency levels demonstrated by various elements of the essay.

Teachers can also evaluate each student's participation in the collaborative writing activities in a variety of ways beginning with the *Text-Centered Discussion Checklist*. They also might collect student revision questions, various drafts illustrating their revisions, as well as feedback on their peers' essay drafts.