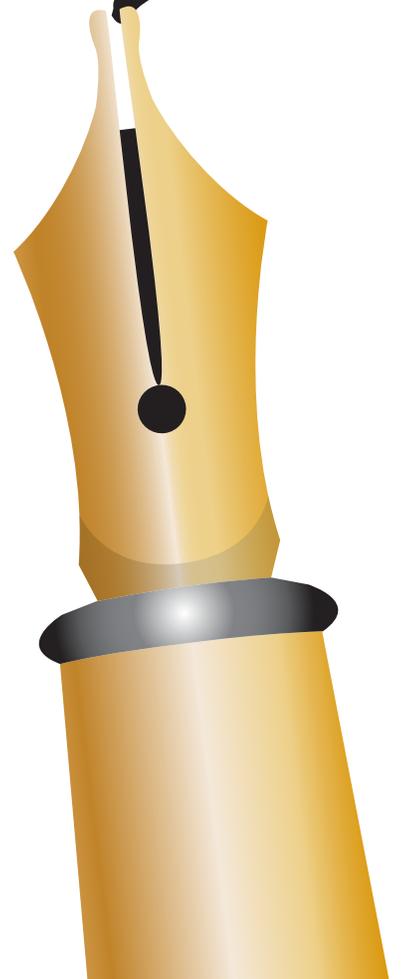




FACING  
HISTORY  
AND  
OURSELVES

# Writing Strategies





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## CRAFTING A THESIS AND ORGANIZING IDEAS

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*Use these strategies **after** the unit.*

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Once students have had an opportunity to engage with the evidence they might use to craft an argument in response to a writing prompt, they can begin to integrate, synthesize, and categorize their ideas. In this section, teachers can challenge students to sort out “What is my perspective on this issue?”

Much of historical thinking and writing involves forming strong arguments or interpretations based on the core concepts in history: Why does this matter? How did this happen? What motivated people in the past to think and act in the ways they did? How do we know what we know? How was this past situation similar to present-day situations? The prompts are designed to engage students in these big questions.

Note: We suggest students begin to craft a thesis after they have had many opportunities throughout a unit to examine and understand the evidence. A recent study found that college professors express concern that many students leap to writing a thesis before they have explored their ideas in sufficient detail.<sup>1</sup> Here, crafting a thesis and organizing ideas are paired, as a way to help students begin to integrate, synthesize, and categorize their ideas.

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<sup>1</sup> Stevi Quate, ed., “Lessons Learned: A Report of the DASSC Writing Inquiry Project,” June 1, 2011, <http://writinginquiry.wikispaces.com/file/view/Lessonslearned.pdf>.

## **STRATEGY 1. Taking a Stand on Controversial Issues: Speaking and Listening Strategies**

**WRITING FOCUS:** Students collect evidence to defend their argument

**COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:** Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. (WHST.11-12.9)

### **RATIONALE**

***Speaking and listening strategies give students early practice with explaining how evidence supports their position. These strategies also support students' critical thinking, since students consider an issue from multiple perspectives.*** Engaging in speaking and listening can be an effective writing exercise before an essay assignment because it brings out arguments for or against a thesis. It can also be effective after writing a first draft of an essay; often, a classroom discussion will clarify thinking and help a student locate the part of their argument to revise.

Because these strategies involve sharing opinions, often in a passionate way, set a contract before this activity. Reiterate your class rules about respect for the opinions and voices of others; call for them to be honest but not insulting. Readdress ways to constructively disagree with one another, and require that when offering their opinion or defense of their stance, they speak from the “I,” rather than from an accusatory “You.”

### **A. BAROMETER PROCEDURE**

1. **Preparation.** Place “Strongly Agree” and “Strongly Disagree” signs at opposite ends of a continuum in your room. Or you can post any statement and its opposite at two ends of a continuum. Any argument or thesis statement can be used for this activity. Give students a few minutes to respond to the prompt in writing before you ask them to “take a stand.”
2. **“Take a Stand.”** Ask students to stand on the spot of the line that represents their opinion, telling them that if they stand on either extreme they are absolute in their agreement or disagreement. They may also stand anywhere in between the two extremes, depending on how much they agree or disagree with the statement.
3. **Explain Positions.** Once students have lined up, ask them to explain why they have chosen to stand where they are. Encourage students to refer to evidence and examples when defending their stance. If students are persuaded to change their opinion, ask them to move along the continuum to show their new thinking.

### **B. SPAR (SPONTANEOUS ARGUMENTATION) PROCEDURE**

1. **Preparation.** Divide class in half. Assign one side to be the pro position and the other side to be the con position. Have students move their desks so they are sitting opposite an opponent. Write a debatable proposition on the board.

2. **Brainstorm Arguments.** Give students one to two minutes to write down their arguments and evidence for or against the proposition.
3. **Opening Statements.** The students will be “SPARring” with the person sitting across from them. Each student (pro and con) presents a **one-minute opening statement** making his/her case while the other listens quietly and takes notes.
4. **Discussion.** Give students 30 seconds to prepare ideas for what they want to say to their opponent. Invite each side to engage in a **three-minute discussion** during which they may question their opponent’s reasoning or examples or put forth new ones of their own.
5. **Closing Statements.** Give students 30 seconds or one minute to prepare a closing statement. Each student presents a **one-minute closing statement** while the other listens quietly, and then the roles reverse.

## C. FINAL WORD

This strategy is a way for students to talk without having the competitiveness that can accompany debate in the classroom.

### PROCEDURE

1. **Preparation.** Divide students into groups of four and have them position themselves so that they are in a circle.
2. **Prompts.** Create a list of claims for students to respond to or ask students to write their own claims (thesis statements).
3. **Sharing in Small Groups.** Ask each group to choose someone to begin. The first few times that you do “Final Word,” remind students of the procedure before you officially begin. The first student has 30 seconds to respond to the claim or share his or her thesis statement. After 30 seconds, the person to the right of the first student has a chance to react to the thesis. This student can choose to respond to the first student or simply give his or her own information. After 30 seconds, the third student speaks, following the same rules. Continue the process with the fourth student. After the fourth student, the first student now gets to have the “Final Word.” He or she receives an additional 30 seconds to respond to the comments of the group, to argue for his or her point, or to summarize the thoughts of the group. In the next round, a different student should begin.

#### A Few Notes:

- No students should speak when it is not their turn to talk. The goal is for each student to have 30 seconds that are entirely his or hers.
- If a student doesn’t talk for his or her entire 30 seconds, the group should wait for the time to run out before the next person begins.

### DEBRIEF

After any of these activities, engage your class in a discussion. Questions to ask include:

- What were the arguments for and against the issue?
- What did you learn during the activity? How does this information relate to the essay prompt?

- What value is to be gained from students arguing positions with which they don't agree?
- What were the strongest arguments? Which arguments were the weakest? What role does evidence play in creating an argument?

### TEACHER'S ROLE:

As students share their ideas, keep notes. Pay particular attention to:

- patterns of insight, understanding, or strong historical reasoning
- patterns of confusion, historical inaccuracies, or facile connections, or thinking that indicates students are making overly simplified comparisons between past and present

The goal is for students to share text-based evidence effectively and accurately. The following categories can guide you, the teacher, as you listen to your students' discussion. Listen for:

- **Factual and interpretive accuracy:** offering evidence that is correct and interpretations that are plausible
- **Persuasiveness of evidence:** including evidence that is relevant and strong in terms of helping to prove the claim
- **Sourcing of evidence:** noting what the source is and its credibility and/or bias
- **Corroboration of evidence:** recognizing how different documents work together to support a claim
- **Contextualization of evidence:** placing the evidence into its appropriate historical context<sup>2</sup>
- As students debrief, weave in feedback. Affirm their insights. Highlight strong historical reasoning and text-based arguments. Choose one or two misconceptions about the content to address. Point out areas where students may want to reevaluate the ways they are connecting past and present.

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<sup>2</sup> Monte-Sano, "Beyond Reading Comprehension."

## **STRATEGY 2. Building Arguments Through Mini-Debates**

**WRITING FOCUS:** Students will practice using evidence to make and defend an argument.

**COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:** Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant data and evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both claim(s) and counterclaims in a discipline-appropriate form and in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values and possible biases. (WHST.11-12.1b)

### **RATIONALE**

***This strategy helps students develop claims for an argument and support those claims with evidence.*** They are not yet being asked to provide analysis explaining how the evidence proves the claim/reason.

### **PROCEDURE**

1. Create a list of items, with or without your students, which could be used to answer the prompt.
2. Write each item on a separate index card.
3. Divide the class into groups or pairs. Pass out one card to each group. Together, each group is responsible for preparing an argument connecting the subject of their card to the prompt. They should
4. After each pair or group has filled out its card, hold a mini-debate in the classroom. Pick a card at random and ask the pair with that card to provide evidence for this topic. The rest of the class should listen to the evidence and try to argue against it. Continue the mini-debates until most or all students have had a chance to defend the topic they were assigned.
5. After this exercise, ask students to write in their journals and note the three pieces of evidence that they found most compelling in the discussions. They may use this in their papers later on.

## **STRATEGY 3. Linking Claims and Evidence with Analysis**

**WRITING FOCUS:** Analyze evidence.

**COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:** Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant data and evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both claim(s) and counterclaims in a discipline-appropriate form and in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values and possible biases. (WHST.11-12.1b)

### **RATIONALE**

**Analysis/explanation is the link or the “glue” that holds the evidence and claim together,<sup>3</sup> explaining how and why the evidence helps prove the claim.** The ability to analyze evidence is central to the study of history; students need to read data or source documents and be able to form interpretations or conclusions. Students benefit from opportunities to analyze and explain evidence orally, as “thinking,” before trying to put that thinking into more formal written form in the body paragraphs of their essays.

Students need to learn how to craft “warrants,”<sup>4</sup> a basic explanation of how their evidence proves their claim. One good way for them to learn this is to give them various pieces of evidence and various claims and have them practice connecting the two.

### **PROCEDURE**

This strategy is best used immediately after the Building Arguments strategy.

1. After completing the card activity, ask students to link the claims with the evidence. Which evidence proves which claims? Use a three-column chart to record answers. (See **Reproducible 1.**)
  - *Left: Claims.* Teacher completes in advance, listing claims students need to prove.
  - *Middle: Evidence.* Students complete first. They either paste in evidence that has been cut up into strips or write in evidence they gather themselves.
  - *Right: Analysis.* Students complete last. This is where they explain *how* the evidence in the middle connects or proves the claim on the left.
2. Ask them to justify their choices, using the following prompts:
  - What does this piece of evidence prove? What makes you say that?
  - How does this piece of evidence prove X? Explain your thinking.
  - What else might this evidence prove?
  - Why is this evidence important?
  - What does this evidence show?

<sup>3</sup> Andrea A. Lunsford and John J. Ruszkiewicz, *Everything’s an Argument*, 2nd ed. (New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2001), 95.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1958).

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**REPRODUCIBLE 1. Three-Column Chart Linking Claims, Evidence, and Analysis**

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CLAIM	EVIDENCE	ANALYSIS →→ (How does the evidence prove the claim?)
<i>(Teacher provides the claim.)</i>	<i>(Student first finds evidence to support the claim.)</i>	<i>(Student then links the evidence with the claim.)</i>

## **STRATEGY 4. Thesis Sorting**

**WRITING FOCUS:** Students will identify several possible thesis statements that address the same essay prompt and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each.

**COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:** Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content; introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences the claim(s), counterclaims, reasons and evidence. (WHST.11- 12.1a)

### **RATIONALE**

***This strategy promotes critical thinking, since in crafting a thesis students are required to put their own ideas in conversation with the text.*** Sometimes a prompt directs students to one obvious thesis statement when there are actually other more nuanced arguments they could make. The purpose of this activity is to help generate the possible arguments that could be made based on the same prompt and for students to understand the elements of a successful thesis.

### **PROCEDURE**

1. **Make Sure Students Understand the Prompt.** See the Dissecting the Prompt strategy in the “Teacher Strategies” section of the [facinghistory.org](http://facinghistory.org) website.
2. **Brainstorm Options.** This could be done as a small group or a whole-class activity. Before having students do a thesis brainstorm for the first time, you might want to model it using a different prompt.
3. **Students Practice Writing Excellent, Good, and Weak Thesis Statements.** After you feel that students understand how to write a thesis, put them into groups of two or three. Ask them to write three thesis statements on different slips of paper. One thesis should be excellent, one good, and one intentionally weak. Before this step, you might want to review the criteria for a good thesis. In general, a good thesis:
  - takes a clear stance on an issue,
  - addresses *all* elements of the prompt, and
  - can be defended with evidence.

An especially strong thesis presents an especially original argument and/or articulates a nuanced or more refined argument.

4. **Students Categorize and Sort Thesis Statements.** After each group has practiced writing different thesis statements, pass out a list of thesis statements that you have already written. We recommend cutting these up so that each statement is on a separate strip of paper. Make sure your list includes excellent, good, and weak theses. You can also include some of the statements that students just wrote in their groups.

In the same groups, ask students to try to categorize the thesis statements into the categories of excellent, good, and weak. Make sure they are using some of the above criteria to make their decisions.

After the groups are finished, ask students to walk around the room and visit other groups' categories. Tell students to notice how different groups interpreted or categorized the same thesis statements.

5. **Debrief and Assessment.** When students return to their original lists, have a class discussion about what they noticed. Where in the class does there seem to be disagreement? confusion? consistency? What is the difference between an excellent, good, and weak thesis statement?

During the discussion, make sure you correct any clear misunderstandings about thesis statements.

As an informal assessment, ask groups to pick two thesis statements in the weak and good categories. Tell the group to edit each thesis statement so that they feel it can move up one category (from weak to good or from good to excellent).

## **STRATEGY 5. Tug for Truth**

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*This strategy is adapted from and used with the permission of Project Zero.<sup>5</sup>*

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**WRITING FOCUS:** Students practice evidence-based reasoning skills.

**COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:** Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content; introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences the claim(s), counterclaims, reasons and evidence. (WHST.11- 12.1a)

### **RATIONALE**

***This strategy encourages students to reason carefully about the “pull” of various factors that are relevant to a question of truth.*** It also helps them appreciate the deeper complexity of matters of truth that can appear black and white on the surface.

### **PROCEDURE**

This strategy builds on students’ familiarity with the game of tug-of-war to help them understand the complex forces that “tug” at either side of a question of truth. The strategy uses a rope or a diagram to represent pulls toward true or false in evaluating a claim. The tug-of-war is between true and false. Help students think about the various factors that tug at one side of the rope or the other, as well as other considerations related to the issue.

1. Identify a question of truth—a controversial claim that something is true or false—where you know there is some evidence on both sides that students can bring forward.
2. Ask students if they have an opinion about it.
3. Draw a tug-of-war diagram on the board (or tape a piece of rope on the wall and use self-stick notes to make it more dramatic). Explain that students can add two kinds of things. One is evidence—tugs in the yes or true direction or in the no or false direction. The other thing to add is a question about the tug-of-war itself, a question that asks for more information or about “what if”—if we tried this or we tried that, what would the results be?
4. Finish the lesson by asking students what new ideas they have about the question of truth:
  - Can we decide now?
  - Do some people lean one way and some the other?
  - Is the best answer in a “gray area”—most of the time true but not always, or true half the time?

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<sup>5</sup> Introduction to Thinking Routines,” accessed October 22, 2011,[http://pzweb.harvard.edu/vt/VisibleThinking\\_html\\_files/03\\_ThinkingRoutines/03b\\_Introduction.html](http://pzweb.harvard.edu/vt/VisibleThinking_html_files/03_ThinkingRoutines/03b_Introduction.html).

## **STRATEGY 6. Refuting Counterarguments**

**WRITING FOCUS:** Students learn to write and challenge counterarguments.

**COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:** Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content; introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences the claim(s), counterclaims, reasons and evidence. (WHST.11- 12.1a)

### **RATIONALE**

***In order to write a strong argumentative paper, students need to both anticipate and refute counterarguments to their thesis.*** This strategy asks students to focus specifically on counterclaims that others may have when reading their ideas. It also promotes critical thinking, since considering and refuting counterarguments requires students to consider an issue from multiple points of view.

### **PROCEDURE**

1. Using an argument the class has brainstormed, show students how someone might respond with a counterargument.
2. Then have the class help you refute this counterargument, drawing on historical evidence. You might want to do this twice before asking students to refute counterarguments on their own.
3. Students can use **Reproducible 2** to practice working with counterarguments. They can complete worksheets with a partner.
4. Students begin with their own worksheet by completing row 1.
5. Then, they switch with their partner and complete row 2.
6. Next, they switch back and complete row 3.
7. Finally, they end with their partner's paper when completing row 4.
8. At the end of this exercise, students can discuss which of the arguments on the page is the strongest and why. This strategy can also be used to help students prepare for a SPAR debate (see Strategy 14).

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## REPRODUCIBLE 2. Sample Counterargument Worksheet

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**WORD BANK:** Useful language to use when making and refuting

Nevertheless	Some might believe	But	Even so	Despite
On the one hand	On the other hand	While	It is true	Yet
In contrast	To some extent	Although	Admittedly	However
It might seem that	What this argument fails to account for			
<b>1. Argument</b> This thesis is true because . . .				
<b>2. Counterargument</b> Yet some people argue . . .				
<b>3. Refutation</b> But . . .				
<b>4. Response</b> On the other hand . . .				

## PROVING YOUR POINT THROUGH LOGICAL REASONING IN BODY PARAGRAPHS

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*Use these strategies **after** the unit.*

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Once students have identified and organized their thesis, arguments, and evidence, they are ready to begin crafting these ideas into coherent paragraphs.

Argumentative essays typically have one “central” argument (the thesis or central claim) and multiple smaller arguments in which the author presents a claim or reason, cites evidence, and offers analysis. This analysis, technically called a “warrant,” is the glue holding claims and evidence together. In this section, we include strategies to help students practice linking claims, evidence, and analysis orally. We also include ways to help students learn more flexible ways to present those ideas so their writing feels fresh, not formulaic.

Many teachers offer students a mini-lesson on an aspect of writing, such as outlining or using transitions, and then give them class time to apply these lessons to their own writing. One of the challenges in supporting students-as-writers is in giving them enough freedom to find their own voice and providing sufficient structure to help them craft a thoughtful, thorough, well-organized essay. Some students will benefit from having clear guidelines, such as graphic organizers to complete, especially if this is their first experience writing a formal, argumentative essay. Students who already understand the basic components of an essay may not need these supports.

## STRATEGY 7. Claims, Data, and Analysis

**WRITING FOCUS:** Analyze evidence in writing.

**COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:** Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant data and evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both claim(s) and counterclaims in a discipline-appropriate form and in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values and possible biases. (WHST.11-12.1b)

### **RATIONALE**

***Strong body paragraphs include claims, evidence or “data,” and analysis or “warrants”.<sup>6</sup> Writers can visualize these three components as a balancing scale. The three components can be put in any order; students need not perceive this as a “formula” to follow.***



The ability to analyze evidence is central to the study of history; students need to read data or source documents and be able to form interpretations or conclusions. Once students have had many chances to practice analyzing and explaining evidence orally, they can begin to put their thinking into a more formal written structure: the body paragraphs of their argumentative essay.

We want students to move away from formulaic body paragraphs (in which they always introduce a claim first, then cite evidence, and then explain how the evidence proves the claim). Once students understand Toulmin’s model for argument—in which one states a claim, provides evidence, and then explains *how* the evidence proves the claim—they can start to mix and match these three elements more flexibly.

### **PROCEDURE**

1. Show students an example of a strong analytical paragraph. (This could be a paragraph from a former student or from **Reproducible 3**).
2. Discuss the ideas in the paragraph. What is the author claiming? Proving? Then discuss how the author crafts his or her argument.
3. On chart paper or on your computer projected to a Smartboard, draw the balancing scale. Label the two scales “claim” and “evidence.” Label the fulcrum “analysis/warrant.” Put this chart somewhere that allows you to refer back to it in the coming weeks.
4. On a big strip of paper, or on your computer projected to a Smartboard, write a simple real-world claim for which you can cite evidence. (Perhaps use a claim

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1958).

that says something positive about the students as a group—e.g., “This class is very responsible”—or about some current event/issue at school. You could also use an example from your current Facing History unit or a previous unit they all will remember.)

5. Next, ask students to cite evidence to prove the claim (e.g., “We come to class prepared,” “We ask questions when we need help”). Write the evidence on a separate big strip of paper or in a different type color on your computer.
6. Then, ask them to provide warrants to link the evidence to the claim (e.g., “Students who are responsible know that it is their job to understand the material and aren’t shy about asking for help if they are confused. That’s how you get smarter”). Again, write this on a third big strip of paper or in a third type color on your computer.
7. Physically manipulate the three strips, or cut and paste on the computer, to show students the various ways these three sentences could be linked. After you show each variation, ask students to talk with a partner about whether they think this variation makes sense, is effective, etc. After all three, ask students to talk about which was best and why. They should be able to determine that there is in fact no “best”—just different ways of including these various components of an argument.
8. Ask students to do the same thing for a claim for their essay and have a partner critique it.

#### **EXTENSION**

After trying out different kinds of analysis, try writing your sentence strips in different orders. What do you gain or lose from each structure?

- 1, 2, 3 (claim, evidence, analysis)
- 2, 1, 3 (evidence, claim, analysis)
- 3, 1, 2 (analysis, claim, evidence)

(See **Reproducible 3**)

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## REPRODUCIBLE 3. Claims, Evidence, and Analysis

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Here are different ideas for how you can link claims and evidence with analysis.

- Make an inference. (*It seems that because of \_\_\_\_\_ , \_\_\_\_\_ happened.*)
- Give an opinion. (*The decision to do \_\_\_\_\_ was dangerous because . . .*)
- Give a reason. (*He made this choice because . . .*)
- Give an effect. (*Because of this decision . . .*)
- Explain the importance. (*This is significant because . . .*)
- Compare and contrast with something. (*This is different from \_\_\_\_\_ because . . .*)
- Make an “if, then” statement. (*If this happened, then . . .*)
- Make a connection to another event or to ideas, past or present. (*This is similar to . . .*)

## **STRATEGY 8. Using Exemplars (or Mentor Texts)**

**WRITING FOCUS:** Students will be able to identify the different parts of successful formal argumentative writing.

**COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (WHST.11-12.4)

### **RATIONALE**

***Using models or mentor texts engages students actively in inquiry, helping them to envision what strong writing looks and sounds like and to construct criteria for their own writing.***

### **PROCEDURE**

1. **Locate Exemplars.** Both student and “expert” (professional) writing can be used as exemplars. Students can read entire essays or only one paragraph. Exemplars you might use include writing by your students; your own writing; or professional writing such as newspaper editorials.
2. **Active Reading of Exemplars.** Often it is easier to recognize qualities of effective (and ineffective) writing when texts are read aloud. Ask a volunteer to read the exemplar aloud while the rest of the class marks up the text. Students can underline main ideas and place question marks near sentences that are unclear. You might ask students to distinguish between evidence and analysis of this evidence.
3. **Evaluating Exemplars.** Whether students are reading one exemplar or several, it helps to give them a rubric they can use to evaluate the writing. Ideally, this is the same rubric that will be used to evaluate their writing. By participating in a discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of writing, students gain a deeper understanding of what they should aspire to produce in their own writing.
4. **Reflective Journal Writing.** Possible prompts for reflection include: What makes some writing better than other writing? What lessons from this exercise will you apply to your own writing?

### **VARIATION**

*Fill in the Essay:* To help build particular writing skills, you could distribute incomplete exemplar essays to students and ask them to fill in the missing parts. For example, you could have students read several body paragraphs and then ask them to write an introduction or conclusion for that essay. Or you could give students an exemplar with only claims and evidence and ask them to add analysis.

## **STRATEGY 9. Using Graphic Organizers to Organize Writing**

**WRITING FOCUS:** Students will organize main ideas, evidence, and analysis before they begin writing.

### **COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:**

Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content; introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences the claim(s), counterclaims, reasons and evidence. (WHST.11-12.1a)

Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant data and evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both claim(s) and counterclaims in a discipline-appropriate form and in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values and possible biases. (WHST.11-12.1b)

### **RATIONALE**

***Graphic organizers can help students put their ideas in a logical order and notice where they need more information.*** You might have all students complete a graphic organizer before writing (or typing) their essays, or you might make this an option for students. By breaking a whole paper into smaller, clear tasks, graphic organizers are especially helpful for students who are unfamiliar with formal essay writing or who struggle with organizing ideas in writing.

One of the challenges in supporting students-as-writers is in giving them enough freedom to find their own voice and providing sufficient structure to help them craft a thoughtful, thorough, well-organized essay. We know that most educators teach students of varying abilities and therefore need several different avenues into an assignment. The graphic organizers that follow are suggestions to use with some of your students who may need extra scaffolds to outline a writing assignment. Some students will benefit from having clear structures, such as graphic organizers to complete, especially if this is their first experience writing a formal, argumentative essay. Students who already understand the basic components of an essay may not need these supports.

### **PROCEDURE**

1. **Select a Graphic Organizer to Use.** There are many ways to visually organize an essay. Some samples are included here as fs, or you can also find other examples on the Web, including the [Sandwich Graphic Organizer](#) and the [Persuasion Plan](#). A graphic organizer provided in this packet uses the MEAL structure to help students organize their ideas:
  - **M**ain idea (argument)
  - **E**vidence that supports that main idea
  - **A**nalysis to explain how the evidence proves the main idea
  - **L**ink between the argument and the thesis statement

2. **Model How to Complete It.** You might show students what an organizer looks like that is complete, or you can complete an organizer together with students. Most teachers only require students to write words and phrases on their graphic organizers, not complete sentences. Whatever you decide, be sure to communicate this to students.
3. **Students Complete the Graphic Organizer in Class and/or at Home.** Often it can help students to have a partner review their work and help them when they get stuck.
4. **Review Graphic Organizers before Students Begin Writing or Typing Their Essays.** Often teachers sign off on students' outline or graphic organizer before students proceed to the writing phase. If students begin the writing with clearly organized ideas, they are less likely to be frustrated with the task of crafting coherent sentences.

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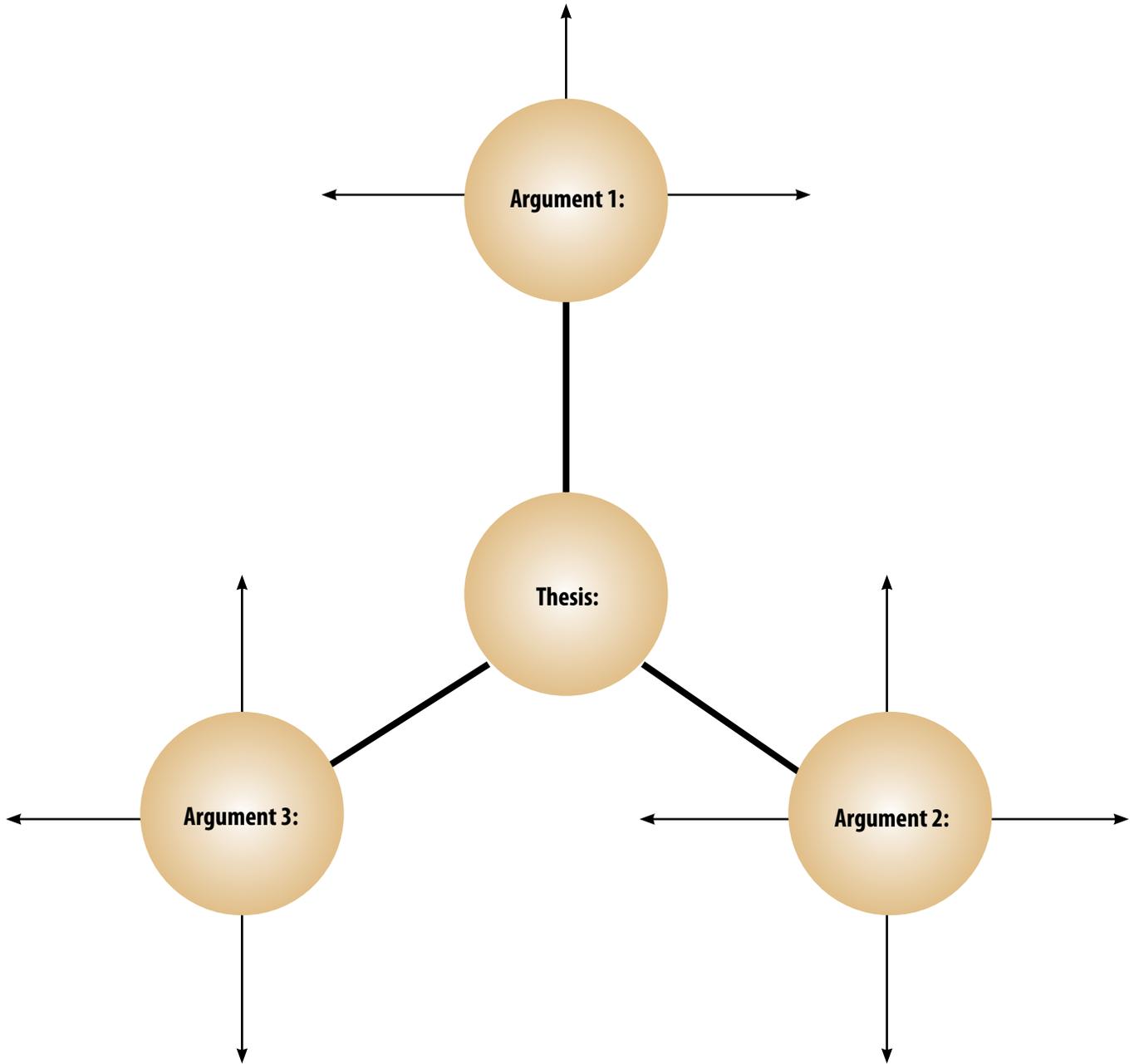
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## REPRODUCIBLE 4. Sample Concept Map Graphic Organizer

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**DIRECTIONS:** Fill in the circles with your thesis and arguments. Connect relevant evidence to each argument.



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## REPRODUCIBLE 5. Outlining Your Essay: Graphic Organizer for Body Paragraph (with feedback sheet)

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OUTLINE FOR BODY PARAGRAPH # \_\_\_\_\_

**THESIS** (The purpose of my paper is to prove ...):

**ARGUMENT** (This thesis is true because ...):

<b>Evidence</b> to support argument (with citation):	<b>Analysis:</b> <i>This evidence supports my argument because ...</i>
1.	
2.	
3.	

(Optional)

**COUNTERARGUMENT** (Some people argue ...):

<b>Evidence</b> to refute counterargument (with citation):	<b>Analysis:</b> <i>This evidence refutes the counterargument because ...</i>

# FEEDBACK ON BODY PARAGRAPH OUTLINE

Author's name:

Editor's name:

This is for feedback on body paragraph # \_\_\_\_\_

**CLARITY OF ARGUMENT:** \_\_\_\_\_ points

\_\_\_\_\_ Argument supports thesis statement. (1 point)

\_\_\_\_\_ Argument does not support thesis statement. (0 points)

**STRENGTH OF EVIDENCE:** \_\_\_\_\_ points

\_\_\_\_\_ Includes two or more pieces of relevant, high-quality evidence. (3 points)

\_\_\_\_\_ Includes one piece of relevant, high-quality evidence. (2 points)

\_\_\_\_\_ Evidence provided but does not support argument or is not high-quality—not from sources we have used in class or other approved source. (1 point)

\_\_\_\_\_ Relevant counterargument is refuted with evidence. (1 point)

\_\_\_\_\_ No evidence provided. (no points)

**CITING SOURCES:** \_\_\_\_\_ points

\_\_\_\_\_ Cites all sources appropriately. (2 points)

\_\_\_\_\_ Cites sources but does not always follow proper format. (1 point)

\_\_\_\_\_ No citations. (no points)

**ANALYSIS:** \_\_\_\_\_ points

\_\_\_\_\_ Clearly explains how evidence supports argument. (2 points)

\_\_\_\_\_ Explains how some, but not all, evidence supports argument. (1 point)

\_\_\_\_\_ Does not explain how evidence supports argument. (0 points)

**SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:**

## **STRATEGY 10. Sentence-Strip Paragraphs**

**WRITING FOCUS:** Students will learn to organize their thinking into paragraphs.

### **COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:**

Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content; introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences the claim(s), counterclaims, reasons and evidence. (WHST.11-12.1a)

Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant data and evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both claim(s) and counterclaims in a discipline-appropriate form and in a manner that anticipates the audience’s knowledge level, concerns, values and possible biases. (WHST.11-12.1b)

### **RATIONALE**

***This strategy can be used to help students organize introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs.*** It has students moving around sentences on slips of paper to help them learn how to organize their ideas in a paragraph. It also should remind students of the earlier analysis activities that they used when crafting their thesis and organizing their ideas.

### **PROCEDURE**

1. **Preparation.** Divide students into groups of four or five. Cut strips of paper and give each group at least ten. This activity could also be done with students working individually or in pairs.
2. **Write Sentences on Strips of Paper.** Students write one sentence on each strip. The type of paragraph you focus on for this activity will determine what you ask groups to write on their slips. For example, if you are using this activity to help students write introductory paragraphs, you would want one group to record possible hooks for the essay, another group to record sentences that would go in the background section, and another group to record possible thesis statements. If you are using this activity to help students write body paragraphs, you might assign a group a particular argument and have them record possible evidence on separate strips of paper.
3. **Share Strips.** Students can either tape their strips to a large piece of paper or leave them on their table.
4. **Build a Paragraph.** Individually or in groups, have students go around the room looking for ideas to help build their paragraphs. Sometimes teachers have students tape the selected strips in order to create a paragraph. Students can also record the sentences or ideas they want to use on a graphic organizer, such as their Inverted Pyramid (see Strategy 25).
5. **Fill in Gaps.** After students build a paragraph with sentence strips, ask them to fill in gaps with new sentences. Gaps might include transition words linking one idea to the next or analysis that explains how evidence connects to the main idea

of the paragraph. Sentence starters you might use to help students add analysis statements include:

- *This evidence shows that . . .*
- *Therefore . . .*
- *These examples demonstrate . . .*
- *Because \_\_\_\_\_, then \_\_\_\_\_.*
- *Clearly, this suggests that . . .*
- *This evidence is an example of . . .*
- *This reveals that . . .*

### **VARIATION**

*Using Exemplars:* To help students practice organizing ideas, you can cut an exemplar essay, such as the one included in the Using Exemplars teaching strategy, into sentence strips and then have students place these sentences in an order that makes sense.

## FRAMING AND CONNECTING IDEAS IN INTRODUCTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

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*Use these strategies **after** the unit.*

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As students develop their argument, it is also important that they keep the “So what?” question in mind. A central mission of Facing History is to help students make connections between history and the choices they make in their own lives. We want them not only to engage with the evidence logically but also to engage emotionally and ethically, considering implications for the present and the future.

When writing a formal essay, students demonstrate that they can make these big conceptual connections mostly in the opening and closing paragraphs. In this section, we include strategies that support students in first making those connections to the here and now and then expressing those connections in ways that are clear and compelling to their audience.

## **STRATEGY 11. Introductions: Inverted Pyramid**

**WRITING FOCUS:** Students will write an organized introductory paragraph, including a hook, background information, and thesis.

**COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:** Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content; introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences the claim(s), counterclaims, reasons and evidence. (WHST.11- 12.1a)

### **RATIONALE**

***The Inverted Pyramid is a structure that represents how an introductory paragraph is typically organized. This strategy helps students understand the content that needs to be included in an introduction and visualize where it should be placed.*** This activity might be most appropriate when students are ready to write their papers, after they have selected their thesis and homed in on their arguments.

### **PROCEDURE**

1. **Preparation.** For this activity students can use a graphic organizer, or they can draw their own upside-down pyramids in their notebooks. The pyramid should be divided into three sections.
2. **Ask Students to Label the Pyramid.** Tell them that this pyramid represents the introduction to their paper. Give them the following terms and definitions and ask them to label where on the pyramid they think it makes sense to place this information. You could also ask students to label these parts on a persuasive essay you give to them as an exemplar.
  - *Hook:* A hook is a sentence or question that captures the reader’s attention—by addressing something that connects to their lives or providing particularly interesting or surprising information. It can also be a general statement that sets the tone for the essay.
  - *Background Information:* To understand an essay, readers often need some background information on a topic. For example, your reader may never have heard about Central High School or Little Rock, Arkansas, or Jim Crow segregation. Writers often use the introduction to provide readers with the basic facts needed to understand the essay.
  - *Thesis Statement:* The *point* of an argumentative essay is to persuade the reader to believe a claim you are making. The main claim of your essay is called the thesis statement.
3. **Have Students Review Other Sample Introductions.** As students read examples of introductions, ask them to label the hook, the background information, and the thesis statement. Ask them questions about the sample paragraphs: What do you like about the introduction? Is anything missing? How might you enhance or rework this introduction?

## **STRATEGY 12. Conclusions: Text-To-Text, Text-To-Self, Text-To-World**

**WRITING FOCUS:** Students will identify connections between the ideas in their essays and their own lives and gather ideas they might use in their concluding paragraph.

**COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:** Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from or supports the argument presented. (WHST.11-12.1e)

### **RATIONALE**

***In the conclusion of an essay, students help the reader understand how the ideas in the essay connect to other events in the past and present. This helps the reader appreciate why the ideas in the essay matter.*** Text-to-Text, Text-to-Self, Text-to-World is a strategy that helps students develop the habit of making these connections. It can be used to help students prepare for writing a conclusion, after they have written the body paragraphs of their essay.

### **PROCEDURE**

1. **Preparation.** Students need a copy of their essay for this activity. You might also want to prepare a graphic organizer for them to do this activity. Or they could answer the questions in a notebook or journal.
2. **Active Reading with Text-to-Text, Text-to-Self, Text-to-World.** Below are sample directions and prompts you can use with this strategy:
  - *Text-to-Text*—How do the ideas in your essay remind you of another text (story, book, movie, song, document, etc.)?
  - *Text-to-Self*—How do the ideas in your essay relate to your own life, ideas, and experiences?
  - *Text-to-World*—How do the ideas in your essay relate to the larger world—past, present, and future?
3. **Debrief and Journal Writing.** Students gain a deeper understanding of their essays, their classmates, and the world around them when they have the opportunity to discuss their responses with peers. Students can share their responses with a partner, in small groups, or as part of a larger discussion.

Possible journal prompts include:

- What ideas are on your mind now about how to conclude your paper?
- Of all the ideas you recorded, which one is the most interesting to you? Why?

## **STRATEGY 13. Fishbowl**

**WRITING FOCUS:** Students will discuss the relevance of the ideas in their essay and practice thinking they will use in their concluding paragraph.

**COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:** Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from or supports the argument presented. (WHST.11-12.1e)

### **RATIONALE**

**As thinkers and writers, students need practice contributing to and listening to a discussion.** The Fishbowl is a teaching strategy that helps students practice being contributors and listeners in a discussion. Students ask questions, present opinions, and share information when they sit in the Fishbowl circle while students on the outside of the circle listen carefully to the ideas presented and pay attention to the process. Then the roles reverse. This strategy is especially useful when you want to make sure all students participate in the discussion, help students reflect on what a good discussion looks like, and provide a structure for discussing controversial or difficult topics.

### **PROCEDURE**

1. **Preparing Students for the Fishbowl.** For the purpose of helping students write conclusions for their essays, you might have students write about one of the following questions in their journals before beginning the Fishbowl discussion:
  - How do the ideas in your paper connect to life today? What is the same? What may be different?
  - What would you like someone to learn from reading your essay?
  - What did you learn from the *Educator’s Guide* unit?
  - What questions are on your mind after writing this essay?

The Text-to-Text, Text-to-Self, Text-to-World strategy also can be used to prepare students to participate in a Fishbowl discussion about the relevance of their essays.

2. **Setting Up the Room.** A Fishbowl requires a circle of chairs (the “fishbowl”) and enough room around the circle for the remaining students to observe what is happening in the “fishbowl.” Sometimes teachers place enough chairs for half of the students in the class to sit in the “fishbowl,” while other times teachers limit the chairs in the “fishbowl.” Typically having six to twelve chairs allows for a range of perspectives while still giving each student an opportunity to speak. The observing students often stand around the “fishbowl.”
3. **Discussing Norms and Rules of the Discussion.** There are many ways to structure a Fishbowl discussion. Sometimes half the class will sit in the “fishbowl” for 10–15 minutes, and then the teacher will say, “Switch.” At this point the listeners enter the “fishbowl,” and the speakers become the audience. Another common Fishbowl format is the “tap” system. When students on the outside of the “fishbowl” wish to join the discussion, they gently tap a student on the inside, and the two students switch roles.

Regardless of the particular rules you establish, you want to make sure these are explained to students beforehand. You also want to provide instructions for the students in the audience. What should they be listening for? Should they be taking notes? Before beginning the Fishbowl, you may wish to review guidelines for having a respectful conversation. Sometimes teachers ask audience members to pay attention to how these norms are followed by recording specific aspects of the discussion process, such as the number of interruptions, respectful or disrespectful language used, or speaking times. (Who is speaking the most? The least?)

4. Debriefing the Fishbowl Discussion and Journal Writing. After the discussion, you can ask students to reflect on the ideas they heard that might be relevant for the conclusions of their essays. What ideas and questions interested them the most?

## REVISING AND EDITING TO IMPACT YOUR AUDIENCE

Use these strategies **after** the unit.

Throughout the drafting of their essay, *and* after students have a complete rough draft, students need opportunities to rethink, revise, and refine their understanding. Students can substantially improve their logic and expression when they receive clear, specific, constructive feedback.<sup>7</sup> They also become better readers of their own writing when they analyze and critique others' writing—both “mentor texts” from the real world<sup>8</sup> and their peers' writing.

During the revising stage, students clarify, reorganize, and strengthen the content of their paper. They might add evidence or elaborate on their analysis. Revising often involves adding transitions to connect ideas and moving content from one paragraph to another.

This section provides two sorts of “revising” strategies: peer feedback and self-assessment. Getting feedback from peers and teachers can help students recognize where their ideas are unclear and what they need to do to make their essay stronger. Students can also evaluate their own essay using the sample rubric.

Note: While Facing History sees the importance of copyediting one's writing to address grammar, spelling, or punctuation errors, in this resource we emphasize the broader challenges of helping students continue to reexamine the historical content and issues and to develop and express their thinking clearly. Teachers may want to help students understand the distinction between “revising” (which literally means “to look again”), or reworking one's ideas, and the much more specific task of copyediting to make one's writing clear and error-free.

After students are confident in the content and organization of their writing, they can move on to edit and spell-check their paper. During editing, teachers may want to provide mini-lessons on trouble spots for students (e.g., properly citing sources, using commas, etc.).

7 Richard Beach and Tom Friedrich, “Response to Writing,” in *Handbook of Writing Research*, ed. C. A. McArthur, S. Graham, and J. Fitzgerald (New York: The Guilford Press, 2006), 222–234.

8 Katie Wood Ray, *Study Driven: A Framework for Planning Units of Study in the Writing Workshop* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2006).

## **STRATEGY 14. 3-2-1**

**WRITING FOCUS:** Students will read a peer’s essay and provide specific feedback. They will also receive feedback on their own writing.

**COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:** 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. (WHST.11-12.5)

### **RATIONALE**

***This activity provides a quick, structured way for students to give and receive feedback.*** The 3-2-1 prompt can be adjusted to suit the needs of particular students and specific assignments. Teachers have also found that using this strategy can help them streamline the feedback-giving process.

As students give each other feedback, again remind them that your focus is broader than this specific essay. You are teaching “the writer, not the writing.”<sup>9</sup> Encourage peers to focus on each other’s growth and persistence as writers.

### **PROCEDURE**

1. **Answering 3-2-1 Prompt.** After students read a paper (either their own or a peer’s paper), ask them to identify:
  - **Three** things the writer did well
  - **Two** next steps the writer could take to make the paper better
  - **One** question they have about the paper

You can vary this prompt to suit specific aspects of the writing journey. For example, students could be asked to identify:

- **One** thesis statement
- **Two** arguments that support the thesis
- **Three** pieces of evidence that support each argument

*or*

- **Three** transition words
- **Two** sources cited properly
- **One** source that still needs to be cited

Students can record their responses on editing sheets, on the essay itself, or on exit cards.

2. **Debriefing.** Use students’ 3-2-1 responses to help evaluate where students may need more support for their writing. What are they able to locate in each other’s papers? What questions keep popping up?

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<sup>9</sup> Lucy Calkins, *The Art of Teaching Writing* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994).

## **STRATEGY 15. Adding Transitions**

**WRITING FOCUS:** Students will identify functions of transition words and phrases and add such words as needed to make their essays more clear and coherent.

**COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:** Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims. (WHST.11-12.1c)

### **RATIONALE**

***Transitions help the reader connect one idea to the next and often distinguish a well-organized paper from a difficult-to-read paper.*** Many students need instruction on how and when to add transitions to their writing. It is often helpful to wait until the revision process to add transitions to a paper.

### **PROCEDURE**

1. **Give Students a List of Transition Words.** Many websites post lists of transition words, like this thorough [list from Michigan State University](#). Here is a shorter list of transition words and phrases you might use to get started:
  - **To express a similar idea:** also, furthermore, in addition, likewise, moreover, similarly
  - **To express something that is a result of something else:** accordingly, as a result, consequently, for this reason, therefore, thus
  - **To demonstrate a point:** for example, for instance, for one thing
  - **To compare and contrast:** on the one hand, on the other hand, on the contrary, rather, similarly, yet, but, however, still, nevertheless, in contrast
  - **To show when something happens in a sequence of events:** to begin with, in the first place, at the same time, next
  - **To summarize:** in conclusion, in summary, to summarize, finally
2. **Help Students Recognize the Value of Transition Words.** One way to do this is to have students read a paragraph or two from a textbook with the transition words removed. Then have them read the same text again, with the transition words inserted.
3. **Have Students Mark on Their Papers Where Transition Words Belong.** You might ask students to place a star at specific places where they expect to see transition words, such as at the beginning of each body paragraph and between sentences in the body paragraphs.
4. **Students Add Transitions to Their Papers.** Using a transition word list, ask students to add a minimum number of transition words to their paper (perhaps five to seven). They can work on this individually and then trade papers with a partner to check each other's work.

## **STRATEGY 16. Backwards Outline**

**WRITING FOCUS:** Students will get feedback on their own writing, particularly the organization of their essay.

**COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (WHST.11-12.4)

### **RATIONALE**

*When students have to create an outline of a paper they are reading, it not only helps them pay attention to the structure of the writing (main idea, supporting evidence, etc.) but also provides important feedback to the writer.*

### **PROCEDURE**

1. **Have Students Find Partners or Assign Partners.** Alternatively, you can collect papers and pass them out randomly. Just be sure that no student ends up with his or her own paper.
2. **Creating Backwards Outlines.** Sample directions:
  - You will create an outline of the paper you are reading.
  - The outline must include the thesis, main arguments, and supporting details you find in the paper.
  - You do not have to write in complete sentences. Just capture the main words and phrases.

It is often helpful to create a blank outline for students to fill in for this exercise. (See **Reproducible 6.**) You can provide a sample completed outline so that students understand that they do not have to rewrite the entire essay on the outline.

3. **Review Feedback and Add Comments.** You can collect the essays and the outlines as a way to evaluate the degree to which students can identify the different parts of a paper. Then you can add your own responses and return the paper, with the outline, to the writer.
4. **Students Revise Papers.** Based on what is missing on their outline, students should revise their paper. If this is the first time you are using this strategy, you might want to review how students will know what they need to do next. For example, if they notice a blank section of their outline, their first step can be to fill in that section.

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## REPRODUCIBLE 6. Blank Argumentative Essay Outline

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*(Adapt this outline to fit the assignment.)*

### INTRODUCTION

**Hook:**

**Background information:**

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

**Thesis:**

### FIRST BODY PARAGRAPH

**Main idea:**

**Supporting evidence:**

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

### SECOND BODY PARAGRAPH

**Main idea:**

**Supporting evidence:**

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

### THIRD BODY PARAGRAPH

**Main idea:**

**Supporting evidence:**

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

## **CONCLUSION**

**Thesis restated:**

**Why are the ideas in this paper important?**

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

## **STRATEGY 17. Conferring**

**WRITING FOCUS:** Students will get specific help on areas of need in their writing and formulate next steps for revision.

**COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:** 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. (WHST.11-12.5)

### **RATIONALE**

***Meeting one-on-one with students is often the most effective way to help a student improve his or her writing. Feedback is most helpful for students when it is both oral and written, and conferences allow for both.*** Conferences can be short, especially if everyone comes prepared, and they typically happen during class time. They can be in the form of a conversation, where students are given time to explain their thinking. For students who need special assistance, you might also confer with them outside of class time.

As you confer with students to respond and give feedback, remember that your focus is broader than this specific essay. You are teaching “the writer, not the writing.”<sup>10</sup> Name and celebrate students’ growth and persistence as writers.

### **PROCEDURE**

1. **Setting Up Effective Conditions for Conferring.** One of the most important questions to think about when deciding to confer with students about their writing is: What will the rest of the class do while I am working one-on-one with students? Often teachers give students time in class to work independently on their papers or other coursework while conferences take place. Sometimes teachers schedule individual student conferences during a class test. Teachers can also invite parents or other volunteers to help out with the rest of the class on days when conferences will take place. Conferences do not work well if the teacher is constantly interrupted by off-task students, so be sure to plan this time well.
2. **Preparing for the Conference.** Conferences also work best when students use this time wisely. They only get a few minutes (typically five minutes) with the teacher, so this time should focus on areas where the student has questions and/or needs help moving to the next level. Students should bring at least three specific concerns to the conference. Sentence starters that students can complete prior to the conference include:
  - *I am confused by . . .*
  - *I don’t know how to . . .*
  - *I need help with . . .*
  - *I am stuck by . . .*
  - *How can I make \_\_\_\_\_ better?*

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<sup>10</sup> Lucy Calkins, *The Art of Teaching Writing* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1994).

To help complete these statements, students should edit their own papers prior to the conference and/or have their papers edited by a peer. Students should bring these editing sheets to the conference.

3. **Conferring.** Students can begin the conference by explaining where they need help. When you have time to read papers in advance, you can also present one or two areas you would like to address during the conference. During the conference, many teachers help students complete a “next steps” card or section on their editing sheet, which details exactly what the student plans on doing after the conference. Students should leave a conference with two or three next steps. More than that is usually overwhelming.
4. **Post-Conference.** After conferences are over, you might debrief with the class about how the conferences went. What makes for successful conferences? What could students and the teacher do better next time? These reflections can happen in writing or through a class discussion. They often provide helpful ideas that can be used to improve conferences the next time around.

## **STRATEGY 18. Read-Alouds**

**WRITING FOCUS:** Students will read another paper and provide specific feedback. They will also receive feedback on their own writing.

**COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:** 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. (WHST.11-12.5)

### **RATIONALE**

***Hearing papers read aloud can be a helpful step in the editing process because it often allows us to notice things we may miss when reading a paper silently.***

### **PROCEDURE**

1. **Have Students Pair Up.** While students can read their own paper aloud, it can also be more useful for them to hear their paper read by someone else. It is best to pair students up for this exercise.
2. **Read-Aloud (Round One).** Have students take turns hearing their paper read aloud. Before students begin, you might want to model an appropriate speed at which to read so that the listener can process the information.
3. **Note-Taking and Debrief.** After hearing their papers read aloud, students should take a few minutes to record notes on their essay about sections they want to revise. They may even read sentences aloud to themselves a second time.
4. **Repeat.** Repeat this process to give both students the opportunity to hear their paper read aloud.

## PUBLISHING/SHARING/REFLECTING

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*Use these strategies **after** the unit.*

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It is important to end the writing process with an opportunity for students to share what they wrote with their peers or an outside audience. Thinkers write for many purposes; the purpose of formal writing is to express an idea to an audience. In this section, we include strategies and suggestions for how students can make their thinking public. We also include ways that students can think about what they learned about the topic and about themselves as writers.

## **STRATEGY 19. Reflecting on the Process**

**WRITING FOCUS:** Students will reflect on the writing journey, celebrate their successes, and formulate a plan for growing in their writing.

**COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:** Write routinely over extended time frames (time for reflection and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline- specific tasks, purposes and audiences. (WHST.11-12.10)

### **RATIONALE**

***The purpose of formal writing is to share one’s ideas with readers. When students have engaged in authentic inquiry about a topic, they need an authentic audience.***

Giving students time to reflect on their writing helps them learn more about their thinking and their writing styles. It also allows students to pause and celebrate the aspects of their writing they are proud of, which in turn will encourage them to approach the next writing task with confidence. Finally, it can also help them discover the gaps in their writing skills and make them more aware of their personal needs when writing another formal paper.

### **PROCEDURE**

In journals, ask students to answer as many of the questions as they can. Have them attach their thinking to the final draft of their essays.

1. What aspect of your paper makes you the most proud?
2. What would you do differently next time? Why?
3. After working on this paper, what have you learned about being a good writer and the journey of writing?
4. What was the biggest challenge for you?
5. What tools or activities helped you write this paper?
6. What could you have done to help yourself write a better essay?
7. What else could have helped you write a better paper? What other support would you have liked from your peers or teacher?
8. What do you need to learn to take your writing to the next level?
9. Do you think being able to present your ideas clearly in writing is important? Why or why not?
10. What surprised you about writing this paper?

## **STRATEGY 20. Online Publishing**

**WRITING FOCUS:** Students will share their work with a broader audience through the Internet or an internal website.

**COMMON CORE ALIGNMENT:** Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information. (WHST.11-12.6)

### **RATIONALE**

***Students need to share their work with an authentic audience outside of their classroom. This will help them to gather additional feedback and evaluate the power and potential of their writing.***

Currently, over half of teenagers produce content for the Internet, and having students think critically about how, why, and where they share content can help students be better overall producers and consumers of online content.

### **PROCEDURE**

1. **Share this video clip<sup>11</sup> with students.** Have students consider the following: In this clip, Justin Reich states that the audience for your class work should not just be your teacher, but a wider global audience. Do you agree with his ideas? Why or why not?
2. **Thinking about Audience.** Teacher and students should think about what of their writing they would like to share with a larger audience and why. For example, students could choose the work they are most proud of, or the class could vote on a few pieces. Some guiding questions might include: Who did you think was the audience for your work on this writing project? Does knowing you will have a particular audience (outside of your teacher) require you to change or adapt your writing? Why or why not? Can you add additional resources (through links or images) that would enhance the online presence of your writing?
3. **Exploring Online Platforms.** Once students decide on an audience they want to share their work with, students may need to explore what sites, forums, or tools could help them reach that audience. Students could work in small groups to search sites that match their intended audiences. Have students search three to five sites with search key words the teacher and group come up with and then answer the following questions about each site.
  - Who runs this site?
  - What is the reputation of the organization or site?
  - How is this site used and by whom?
  - Could I/would I use this to share my schoolwork?

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11 Justin Reich, co-director of EdTechTeacher (<http://www.edtechteacher.org/>), and author of *Best Ideas for Teaching with Technology: A Practical Guide for Teachers by Teachers*, is a doctoral candidate at the Harvard University School of Education and project manager of the Digital Collaborative Learning Communities Project, funded by the Hewlett Foundation.

- Would I receive feedback from this site?
  - What might be the benefits or drawbacks from sharing on this site?
4. Once students have explored their sites and compared answers to the questions, bring all students back to the larger group to share their findings, being sure to explain at least one of the sites to the rest of the class, including what they explored and how it works. Students and teacher may decide that their writing does not fit an external site they explored. This realization can be an important one because it shows students thinking critically about their work, the audience, and the responsibility and vulnerability that comes from sharing online.
  5. The class may decide to share within the school or between classes by setting up their own internal website. This would allow student work to be posted and commented on by classmates. This approach can give students a similar experience within a controlled environment. Below are some sites you may want to employ for class writing projects.
    - Wikis ([www.wikispaces.com](http://www.wikispaces.com))
    - Blogs ([www.edublogs.org](http://www.edublogs.org), [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com))
    - Online discussions ([www.ning.com](http://www.ning.com))