



Indiana Department of Education
SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

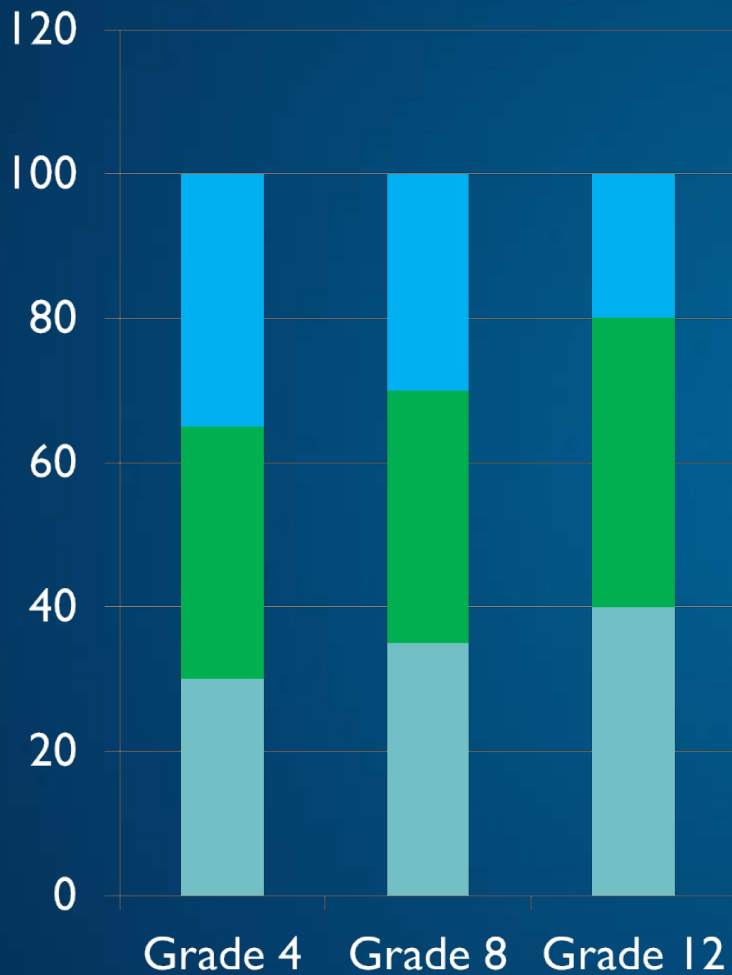
Major Shift #4: The Special Place of Argument

Overview

1. The distribution of writing tasks
2. The special place of argument
3. Tools you can use



Distribution of Writing Tasks



Distribution of Communicative Purposes by Grade in the 2011 NAEP Writing Framework

Grade	To Persuade	To Explain	To Convey Experience
4	30%	35%	35%
8	35%	35%	30%
12	40%	40%	20%

Source: National Assessment Governing Board. (2007). *Writing framework for the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Progress, pre-publication edition*. Iowa City, IA: ACT, Inc.

- To Convey Experience
- To Explain
- To Persuade

These expectations are based on the cumulative writing experiences from English language arts and content-area courses.



The Special Place of Argument

While all three text types are important, the Standards put particular emphasis on students' ability to write sound arguments on substantive topics and issues, as this ability is critical to college and career readiness. English and education professor Gerald Graff (2003) writes that "argument literacy" is fundamental to being educated. The university is largely an "argument culture," Graff contends; therefore, K-12 schools should "teach the conflicts" so that students are adept at understanding and engaging in argument (both oral and written) when they enter college. He claims that because argument is not standard in most school curricula, only 20 percent of those who enter college are prepared in this respect. Theorist and critic Neil Postman (1997) calls argument the soul of an education because argument forces a writer to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of multiple perspectives. When teachers ask students to consider two or more perspectives on a topic or issue, something far beyond surface knowledge is required: students must think critically and deeply, assess the validity of their own thinking, and anticipate counterclaims in opposition to their own assertions.



Tools You Can Use

1. [Appendix C of the Common Core State Standards](#)
2. [Purdue Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#)
3. [ProCon.org](#)





Indiana Department of Education

SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS

Adam Jones

English Language Arts Specialist

ajones@doe.in.gov

(317) 233-4936