Teaching to the Test: De/Reconstructing the Argument

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Arthur Vining Davis Project Overview

October 2013-April 2014
Chesnee High School, Spartanburg, SC
Team Members: Adam Christenson (student), Mrs. Caley Rogers (HS teacher), and Dr. Natalie Grinnell (Wofford Faculty)

Title:
Teaching to the Test: De/Reconstructing the Argument

Abstract:

With the implementation of the Common Core Standards, the new Common Core test will start in Spring of 2015. This standardized test is given during the spring of a student’s junior year. Though the test is given junior year, the onus for making sure students are ready is also that of teachers working with freshmen and sophomores. Preparing students to be proficient in the skills necessary for college and potential careers is paramount; one way to ensure such preparation is creating exercises similar to that of the performance task on the sample test. The performance task focuses on assessing a student’s ability to comprehend multiple sources on one topic, support various claims with evidence from multiple sources, establish a counterargument, and compose an argumentative letter as a final product. The purpose of this project is to have students go through similar rhetorical moves as they will on the actual test. However, since the students are sophomores, the exercise will take place in small groups and at stations that divide up the tasks into more manageable chunks. Doing so will allow me to pinpoint students’ areas of weakness and modify the second exercise and my instruction accordingly to maximize learning and preparedness for constructing a solid argument.

Goals for Project Development:

- The AVD group will develop templates (color-coded) to assist students in constructing their argumentative letter. The color-coding will help students clearly understand how the work done in groups translates to their argumentative letter.
- The AVD group will assemble multiple sources on the three topics—causes of the Civil War, payment of NCAA athletes, and landfill dumping—that present both or multiple sides of the argument associated with each topic. Sources will be both print and electronic to mimic those found on the Common Core assessment. Caley Rogers will assess sources for appropriate length and reading level as necessitated by her students.
- The AVD group will determine set tasks for each table so as students rotate to tables, they will have a clear understanding of what’s expected.
- These materials will be typed and saved in .doc or .pdf formats so Caley Rogers can share materials with the other English teachers in her department and Chesnee High School’s literacy coach.

Objectives for Students:
Students will read multiple sources (ideally 3-4) on an arguable topic—causes of the Civil War, payment of NCAA athletes, and/or landfill dumping. They will need to be able to summarize the sources, utilize the sources to support claims, and create a counterargument. Students will use templates (both modified and straight from the text) from They Say / I Say at the stations to help organize their thoughts and to ensure they have all the necessary pieces to create an argumentative letter. The first exercise will focus on students reading the sources in small groups (3-4 students). They will help each other determine main idea, the central argument, evidence to support the texts’ claims, and counterclaims. The second exercise will require students to perform similar tasks, but it will be on a different topic will less support from the teacher. Doing so promotes the gradual release method in education.

Assessment:

Assessment for the first exercise will be based mostly upon formative assessment—as students work in small groups and travel between the stations, Caley Rogers and Adam Christenson will note which tasks prove to be the most difficult or are too simple. This evidence will take the format of a reflection entry.

Students will be assessed based upon their participation in the activity and ability to work with groups. Students’ answers will vary slightly between groups—some tasks will have multiple correct answers. Caley Rogers will review answers with the whole class and sample answers for some of the more open-ended tasks. With the second exercise, students will receive credit for participating and effort, but they will also have a summative assessment in the format of actually writing an argumentative letter based upon the sources. This will be assessed based upon a scoring guide developed after the first exercise; the writing will be done both in-class and for homework, but it will be assessed as a rough draft instead of a polished final. This scenario also mirrors the first draft nature of the essay students will write for the Common Core test.

Budget for Materials:

- Two copies of They Say / I Say: $50 (plus shipping)
- Placeholder signs for groupings (set of 12): $26.99 (plus shipping)
- SLED background check for Wofford student: $25.00
- Copy Paper—colored paper and white: varies per ream, est. $9-10 per ream
- Reimbursement for mileage to and from team meetings and the AVD summit

Common Core Standards:

- RI.9-10.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- RI.9-10.5 Analyze in detail how an author’s ideas or claims are developed and refined by particular sentences, paragraphs, or larger portions of a text (e.g., a section or chapter)
- RI.9-10.6 Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.
- RI.9-10.8 Delineate an 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.
- W.9-10.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant sufficient evidence (1a and 1b)

**Text:**

**STATION ONE—Payment of NCAA Athletes**

Based on your reading of the articles, what are some potential challenges that colleges and universities may face in paying college athletes?
- Give 2-3 challenges (write them in your own words) from 2 different sources (cite the source next to it—ex: (Article 1)

Write your answers below:

**STATION ONE—Payment of NCAA Athletes**

Based on your reading of the articles, what are some potential challenges that colleges and universities may face in paying college athletes?
- Give 2-3 challenges (write them in your own words) from 2 different sources (cite the source next to it—ex: (Article 1)

Write your answers below:
STATION TWO—Payment of NCAA Athletes

Using information from 2 different sources, provide three (3) reasons that support the claim NCAA athletes should be paid. Make sure to provide one (1) quote to support each reason.

Reason 1:
Source:
Quote:

Reason 2:
Source:
Quote:

Reason 3:
Source:
Quote:
STATION TWO—Payment of NCAA Athletes

Using information from **2 different sources**, provide **three (3) reasons** that support the claim NCAA athletes **should be paid**. Make sure to provide **one (1) quote** to support each reason.

**Reason 1:**

*Source:*

*Quote:*

**Reason 2:**

*Source:*

*Quote:*

**Reason 3:**

*Source:*

*Quote:*

STATION THREE—Payment of NCAA Athletes

Using information from **two (2) different sources**, provide **three (3) reasons** that support the claim NCAA athletes **should NOT be paid**. Make sure to provide **one (1) quote** to support each reason.

**Reason 1:**

*Source:*

*Quote:*

**Reason 2:**

*Source:*

*Quote:*

**Reason 3:**

*Source:*

*Quote:*
Quote:

Reason 3:

Source:
Quote:

STATION THREE—Payment of NCAA Athletes

Using information from two (2) different sources, provide three (3) reasons that support the claim NCAA athletes should NOT be paid. Make sure to provide one (1) quote to support each reason.

Reason 1:

Source:
Quote:

Reason 2:

Source:
Quote:

Reason 3:

Source:
Quote:

STATION FOUR—Payment of NCAA Athletes

Joe Nocera claims in his article “Let’s Start Paying College Athletes” that “given the way big-time college sports are going, paying the players may be the only way to save them.”

- Using two (2) other sources, provide 2 quotations and explanations that would support Nocera’s claim.
STATION FOUR—Payment of NCAA Athletes

Joe Nocera claims in his article “Let’s Start Paying College Athletes” that “given the way big-time college sports are going, paying the players may be the only way to save them.”

- Using two (2) other sources, provide two (2) quotations and explanations that would support Nocera’s claim.

Source:

Quotation:

Explanation:

Source:

Quotation:

Explanation:

Source:

Quotation:

Explanation:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria for NCAA Mini Argument:</th>
<th>Earned Points:</th>
<th>Possible Points:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Claims</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Clear claim sentence for each paragraph (thesis in first paragraph)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Claim reflects actual content of the paragraph</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support of Claims</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Quotations are used effectively from multiple article sources (at least 2) and cited</td>
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</tr>
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<td>- Analysis of evidence/support clearly shows how the support helps prove the claim of each paragraph</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Analysis goes beyond simply restating the support in different words</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Counterclaim/Counterargument</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
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<td>- Transitions to other side of the argument and supplies a reason with support</td>
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<td>- Uses &quot;however&quot; to come back to original argument</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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**TOTAL:**

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**TOTAL:**
**NARA Argument Mini Essay**

1. **Introduction**: Sentence that explains the details.
   - Your claim sentence (thesis)
   - In support of/against (thesis)

2. **Evidence**
   - Reason 1
   - Support (quote)
   - Explanation
   - Conclusion sentence (bring it back around to claim)

3. **Evidence 2**
   - Reason 2 (claim sentence)
   - Support (quote)
   - Explanation
   - Conclusion sentence

4. **Counterclaim**
   - Opposite side of your argument
     - Side of the coin that hasn’t been thought through
     - The other side points out...
   - Explain one main point...
   - Support (quote, an opinion, an example from an article)
   - Explain
     - After explaining the other side, start your next sentence
     - With... However...
     - In other words... By your side, disagree...
   - Conclusion sentence
One big question being debated is, should NCAA athletes be paid or not? No NCAA athletes should not be paid, because people would begin to look at colleges as a business instead of a place of education. Also because it is not fair to the rest of the student bodies of fellow athletes to not be paid. For example, when Scoop Jackson from the article “The myth of parity” writes, “We allow the ‘school’ part to blind us into thinking that the educational piece changes the dynamics of what is really going on and exempts athletics from being something other than money.” (A1). It’s a ridiculous idea to think that a place of education should become a place of business. Of course games attract fans who bring in big money, but that doesn’t mean the money they bring in should become a paycheck to the players. The money rose from the concessions, tickets, and souvenirs should go towards their schools. After all, it was their choice to play knowing they weren’t going to get paid, so why start paying them now? Students in college are there for a reason, to learn. Not to make millions of dollars playing a sports game that most people won’t make in a lifetime. If an athlete wants to be paid for playing a sport, they can wait and see if they get drafted into the NFL or NBA. If college were a place of business and not a place for education, what would all the non-athletes do?