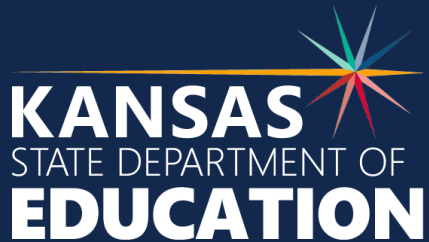


Making Thinking Visible

Teaching Claim, Evidence, Reasoning



Kansas State Department of Education | www.ksde.gov

Kansas leads the world in the success of each student.

Introductions

Mary Lonker
KSDE ELA Program Manager
Teaching and Learning - Standards
(785) 296-2144
mary.lonker@ksde.gov

Mary T. Williams, NBCT
Teacher Leader Consultant
ELA Team, KSDE
(785) 296-2144
mary.williams@ksde.gov

BECAUSE, BUT, SO

Take a moment to think about and write answers to these prompts.

- Teachers should teach Claims, Evidence, Reasoning *BECAUSE*

- Teachers should teach Claims, Evidence, Reasoning *BUT*

- Teachers should teach Claims, Evidence, Reasoning *SO*

(Hochman & Wexler, 2017)

How “the buts” Stop Good Teaching

- What were your “buts”?
- How can our “because and so’s” help us overcome the “buts”?



What is CER?

Claim - Central debatable statement that expresses the position on a topic

Evidence - Factual information to support a claim

Reasoning - The logical explanation to connect the evidence to the claim

Three Types of Argumentative Writing

1. **Opinion:** The author tries to convince the reader regarding their opinion.
 - This is the easiest and often used at the elementary level.
2. **Pro/Con:** The author offers two sides of the issue and presents evidence supporting each side but doesn't create a position (claim).
 - Helps students transition to argument writing and understanding opposing viewpoint or counterclaims.
3. **Argument:** The author decides which position has merit (claim), provides evidence for both sides (evidence) and defends the side supported (reasoning).

Why We Should Teach CER

Increase student's depth of knowledge in all content areas.

- Every content area requires students to think using evidence from the text. Students who can make a claim, support it with evidence, and explain their reasoning are better readers, writers, historians, scientists, and problem solvers.
- Learning to develop a claim, evidence, and reasoning allows students to explain their thinking rather than simply answer questions increasing their depth of knowledge over various content.

Webb's Depth of Knowledge

Cognitive Engagement: Depth of Knowledge Level

KSDE Aligned with Kansas Assessment for ELA and Math

DOK 1 Recall and Reproduction

Recall a fact, term, definition, principle, or concept; perform a single procedure.

DOK 2 Basic Application of Skills and Concepts

Apply conceptual knowledge; use provided information to select appropriate procedures for a task; perform two or more steps with decision points along the way; solve routine problems; organize or display data; interpret or use simple graphs.

DOK 3 Strategic Thinking

Apply reasoning, using evidence, and developing a plan to approach or solve abstract, complex, or nonroutine problems; interpret information and provide justification when more than one approach is possible.

DOK 4 Extended Thinking

Perform investigations or apply concepts and skills that require research and problem solving across content areas or multiple sources.

Why We Should Teach CER

- CER helps students move from being a passive receiver of information to a critical thinker.
- It increases reading comprehension.
- Students learn to use evidence and reasoning to support their claim rather than just “hunches”.
- CER helps students learn how to organize their thoughts logically.
- It is easily transferable to all content area, thus helping students bridge between content areas.

Disciplinary Connection

Instead of students learning different writing expectations in every subject, they repeatedly should practice one transferable process:

1. Make a claim
2. Find evidence
3. Explain the reasoning

A schoolwide CER framework gives students repeated opportunities to think, speak, read, and write with evidence - regardless of the content area.

The consistency of this process strengthens literacy while deepening learning across every classroom.

CER should start in early elementary

Every content area requires students to think critically and use evidence to support their reasoning.

ELA Writing Standards Kindergarten to Grade 12

- **W.K.1:** Use a combination of drawing, dictating and writing to compose opinion pieces in which they tell a reader the topic or the name of the book they are writing about **and** state an opinion **or** preference about the topic or book.
- **W.1.1:** Write opinion pieces in which they *introduce the topic* or name the book they are writing about, state an opinion, supply a reason for the opinion **and** provide some sense of closure.
- **W.3-4.1.b:** Introduce the topic or text they are writing about, state an opinion **and** create an organizational structure that lists reasons.
- **W.6-8.1.b:** Support claim(s) with logical reasoning **and** relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources **and** demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
- **W.11-12.1.b:** Develop claim(s) **and** counterclaims fairly **and** thoroughly, supplying the *most relevant evidence* for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both in a manner that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values and possible biases.

Developing a Claim: BECAUSE, BUT, SO

Simple but powerful: *Because, But, So* method.

It seems so simple but can actually require students to think analytically.

- **Because:** Explains by something is true, why something happened, or why a certain condition exists.
- **But:** Indicates a change of direction or a change in thinking
- **So:** Tells what happened as a result of something else - a cause and effect

Teacher Tip: Use *Because, But, So* to write a claim.

- Topic + Opinion + Because statement = Claim

(Hochman & Wexler, 2017)

Disciplinary Connection: Math

Teach CER within all content

Elementary:

- $-2 + 6$ is positive because there are more positive than negatives.
- $-2 + 6$ is positive, but -2×6 is negative.
- $-2 + 6$ is positive, so it makes sense that the answer is 4.

Upper Level:

- Discount is an example of percent decrease because the discount is subtracted from the total.
- Discount is an example of percent decrease, but tip is an example of percent increase.
- Discount is an example of percent decrease, so to find the answer you subtract the discount from the total.

Disciplinary Connection: Social Studies

Teach CER within all content

Elementary Example:

- Early humans were nomads because they followed migrating herds for food.
- Early humans were nomads but they often settled in a spot for the winter.
- Early humans were nomads so they could survive and provide for their families.

Upper Level Example:

- Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation because he believed that slavery should end in the United States.
- Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation but the Civil War continued.
- Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation so slaves would eventually be free.

Disciplinary Connection: Science

Teach CER within all content

Elementary Example:

- Seeds need light to grow because plants use photosynthesis to create food.
- Seeds need light to grow but they also need water.
- Seeds need light to grow so they can germinate and become strong plants.

Upper Level Example:

- GMO's should be used in agriculture because they can be engineered to resist pests and increase crop yields.
- GMO's should be used in agriculture but there are concerns about their impact on biodiversity.
- GMO's should be used in agriculture so it's important to conduct research and establish regulations.

What is Evidence

Students need to collect evidence - not opinions

Teacher Prompts:

- What “clues” or evidence does the **author** provide?
- Which “clues” or evidence actually prove your point?
- Which details might become evidence later?

Student Look Fors:

- Important facts
- Significant details
- Quotes
- Data
- Patterns or Repeated Ideas



The Watchmakers Arc

"We fix *clocks* here, kid. I don't touch battery-powered plastic," Arthur grunted, waving a dismissive hand.

"My grandpa gave it to me right before he died," Leo whispered, clutching the scuffed blue band to his chest. "It stopped showing the time today."

Arthur paused. The silence in the shop suddenly felt heavy, punctuated only by the relentless ticking of fifty wall clocks. He pushed his magnifying visor up onto his forehead and looked down. The boy wasn't looking for a lecture on horology; his eyes were brimmed with unshed tears, guarding the last physical connection he had to someone he loved.

Slowly, Arthur set down his vintage tweezers. For fifty years, he had measured a time piece's worth by the weight of its metal and the complexity of its movement. But looking at the scuffed plastic, he realized he'd been measuring the wrong thing entirely.

"Let me take a look," Arthur said, his voice dropping its usual harsh edge.

What is an Essential Question?

In order for students to find the strong evidence, they should learn to **use or develop** an Essential Question? By doing so, they can read a complex text with a purpose. It will reduce the cognitive overload!

Example:

Rather than simply stating “find examples of the theme...”

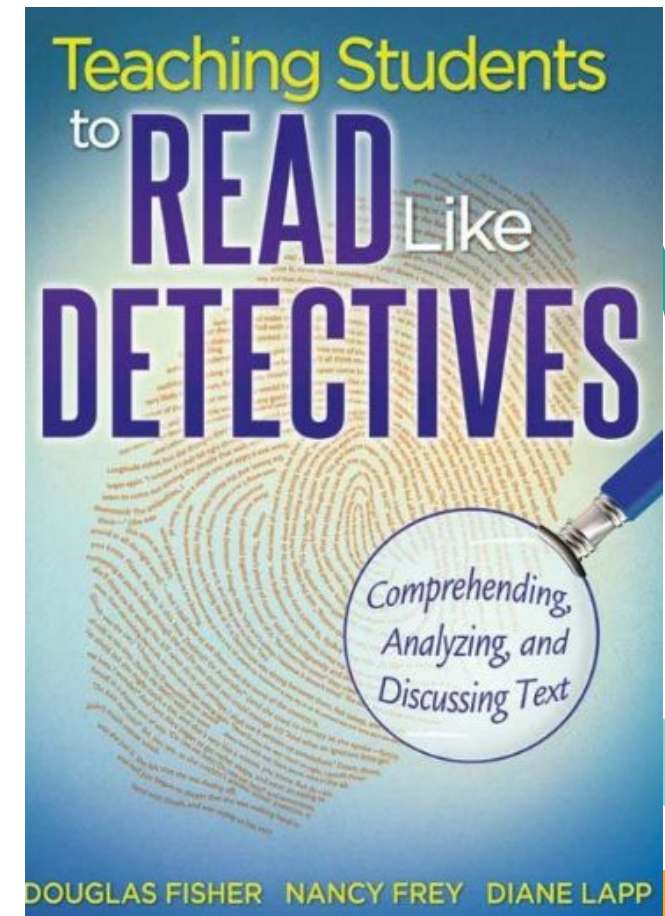
Students should start with an essential question that helps them direct their thinking and reading direction. It provides the purpose.

- How does the main character grow or change?
- Why does the author have the character change?
- Where is evidence to prove that?

How to Find Best Evidence

Teach Students To Read Like a Detective - Close Reading

1. **Begin with a purpose for reading.** Students should know what essential question they are trying to answer or support.
2. Students should read the *grade level text* with a specific writing purpose: Reading and writing are then seen as reciprocal processes.
3. **The purpose drives close reading.** Instead of highlighting everything that sounds good - have students answer questions while reading.
 - a. Does this answer the question?
 - b. Does this support my claim?
 - c. Is it important enough to use?



Evaluate the Evidence

Teach Students To Read Like a Detective -

Teaching how to evaluate the evidence is the most often missed step.

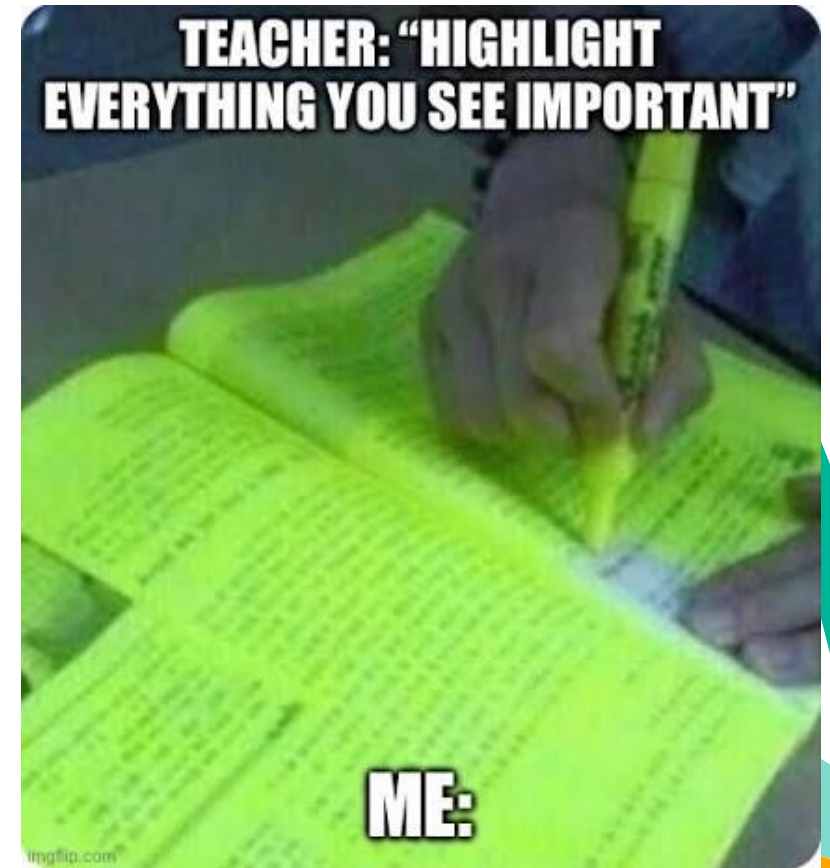
Explicitly teach students to ask:

Which evidence is...

- Most credible? Most reliable?
- Most convincing?
- Most specific?
- Strongest?

Students need to be shown that not ALL evidence is equally valuable.

Use the EQ to drive the purpose.



Providing the Reasoning

Students need to provide rationale or reasons with each piece of evidence! This should grow in complexity along with the text(s) they are using to provide evidence.

Students Answer: *How and Why* after each piece of evidence.

- What does the evidence reveal?
- How does the evidence support my claim?
- Why is this evidence valuable or important?

Give Students Sentence Frames:

- This evidence suggests...
- This proves...
- This reveals...
- Therefore...

Reminder: Content Drives the Rigor

All students need to be **reading grade level text**

- Use scaffolds and strategies to help struggling readers
- Keep all students in the room for the academic discussions

Cognitive Overload

- Students are often in cognitive overload when the demands of a task exceed the amount of information a learner can actively process in their working memory. If the content is new, difficult, or complex, more explicit instruction needs to take place for the writing.

Content drives the rigor

- Devote students mental energy to higher order thinking rather than figuring out the process. Keep the process, the strategies, the framework the same.



BECAUSE, BUT, SO

Using the information we just shared, rewrite the following statements:

- Teachers should teach Claims, Evidence, Reasoning *BECAUSE*

- Teachers should teach Claims, Evidence, Reasoning *BUT*

- Teachers should teach Claims, Evidence, Reasoning *SO*

(Hochman & Wexler, 2017)

Join Us!

KSDE Extended Learning Opportunity

- The ELA and Early Literacy Team will be offering an online learning opportunity once a week starting September 14th.
- We will be reading and reviewing Joan Sedita's *Essentials of Adolescent Literacy*.

Use the QR Code below to access the flyer:

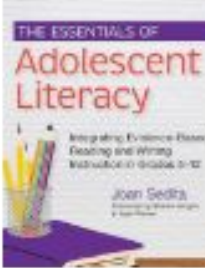


KANSAS STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

SAVE THE DATE



Essentials of Adolescent Literacy



KSDE Extended Learning Opportunity:

Once again, The KSDE ELA team will be partnering with the Early Literacy team to offer a text based learning opportunity with Joan Sedita's new book, *Adolescent Literacy Integrating Evidence-Based Reading and Writing Instruction in Grades 5-12*.

This will be a free professional development for you and any one in your school. All you will need is a copy of Joan Sedita's book by September!

Registration Details:

When: Starting **next fall** through Zoom.

- We will begin **Monday, September 14th - Monday, November 2nd**
- From 5:00 - 6:00 PM

Who: Any educators in grades 4-12, including classroom teachers, special education/intervention educators, literacy coaches, and administrators.

What To Expect: This book helps secondary educators understand the unique aspects of adolescent literacy. We will cover the practical suggestions for integrating reading and writing instruction into content area classrooms and providing data driven intervention for older struggling students.

How: [Click on the registration link](#). Registration will be open until August 28, 2026.

- Earn PDC points to submit to your district!
- You will receive 1 hour of professional development credit for each Monday night meeting you can attend. A certificate will be sent out the following day for you to collect and submit to your district.
- Once registration is closed in August, you will receive a confirmation email, a zoom link, and an outline for each date.



Mary Lonker
KSDE ELA Program Manager
Teaching and Learning - Standards
(785) 296-2144
mary.lonker@ksde.gov

Mary T. Williams, NBCT
Teacher Leader Consultant
ELA Team, KSDE
(785) 220-7580
mary.williams@ksde.gov

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Strategies for explicit teaching from *The Writing Revolution*



SENTENCE EXPANSION

By expanding kernel sentences, students can develop stronger sentences for their argument.

Mesopotamians built ziggurats.

When? ancient times

Where? center of city-states

Why? provide earthly homes for gods and goddesses

Expanded Sentence: In ancient times, the Mesopotamians built ziggurats at the center of the city-states to provide earthly homes for gods and goddesses.

SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Teaching students to utilize subordinating conjunctions and transitions such as *while*, *although*, *however*, and *on the other hand*, enables students to make a claim while also bringing in an opposing claim.

Examples of adding conjunctions and transitions

Students can start by using a basic argument:

Theodore Roosevelt has many admirers **because** he established the national parks and expanded national forest.

Examples of adding conjunctions and transitions

Help students develop the concept of pros/cons by:

Although Theodore Roosevelt moved the United States toward becoming a world power, critics argued that Roosevelt had imperialistic tendencies.

Examples of adding conjunctions and transitions

Help students develop using transitions and conjunctions by providing (eventually, they should be able to utilize their own):

Theodore Roosevelt supported a rebellion in Panama against Colombia. **Consequently**, he was criticized for interfering in the internal affairs of another country.

CREATING TOPIC SENTENCES

Students should practice creating topic (thesis) sentences.

This helps students to identify and develop main points they want to make in their argument.

By developing the skill of making topic sentences, students learn to state their argument. This is the first piece to critical thinking-being able to state a claim they will want to defend.

Assessment Tool

Introduction (GST) and Conclusion (TSG) Checklist



GST	
General	
☐	Does it introduce a broad topic?
Specific	
☐	Does it narrow the focus of the topic?
☐	Does it provide specific information (time period, names)?
☐	Does it bridge the G and T, without repeating either?
Thesis	
☐	Does it name the main ideas or plan of development of the composition?
TSG	
(rephrase) Thesis	
☐	Does it restate the main ideas from the thesis in different words?
(new) Specific	
☐	Does it build on the T with specific examples from the body paragraphs?
(new) General	
☐	Does it conclude the essay with a broad idea about the topic?
☐	Does it leave the reader with a final thought about the topic's broader significance?

SUMMARIZING (Quotes and Paraphrasing)

As students research and find evidence, being able to summarize such evidence is important for cognitive load as well as learning about plagiarism and avoiding such.

Summarizing helps students develop the ability to describe claims on both sides.

As students learn to summarize, they also learn how to quote material from sources as well as paraphrasing sources. This allows them to scaffold toward the ability to add citations to their argumentative writing.

OPINION WRITING

Students need the opportunity to determine the difference between fact and opinion.

They need to understand that as they work into argumentative writing, opinion will not support their argument.

Starting in elementary (and on through the upper grades) have students determine whether a statement is a fact or an opinion. Some can become more nuanced as students get older.

Example of Opinion Writing

TOPIC SENTENCE: A lot of students love summer.

FACTS:

No School or homework

Swimming

More time outside

Longer Days

CONCLUDING SENTENCE: Summer is the best time of year! (OPINION)

PRO/CON WRITING

Students do not take a stance.

One paragraph would be all of the pros about a subject.

Another paragraph would be all of the cons about a subject.

There is an introduction and conclusion but students do not choose their claim.

This writing allows students to start seeing both sides to an argument, thus helping them learn how they might develop their own claim regarding an argument. It also starts to help them develop the critical thinking necessary to truly develop their argument.

SINGLE PARAGRAPH OUTLINES (SPO)

Practice writing topic sentences for a paragraph, summarizing a position on one side of an argument.

List appropriate details for the topic.

Create an SPO to support the argument backed with evidence.

Create an SPO to provide an opposing argument with evidence.

Details can be provided and students sort them into support vs. opposing.

Eventually, students will research their own evidence details.

Example of SPO (Pro)

T.S. Zoos benefit animals in many ways.

- 1) provides food, water, shelter
- 2) care for injured or abandoned animals
- 3) protects endangered species
- 4) educate visitors/help with conservation

C.S. Zoos keep animals safe and help them survive.

Example of SPO (Con)

T.S. It is cruel to keep animals in zoos.

- 1) small exhibit areas/less place to roam
- 2) captivity, causes the animals stress
- 3) lose the ability to live in the wild
- 4) visitors tease animals

C.S. Boycott zoos!

Students then develop a well written paragraph from their outlines.

TRANSITION OUTLINES (TO)

The next step to helping students build strong argumentative essays is to offer practice using transitions.

Gives practice writing pro/con thesis statements that provides both sides without taking a position.

Although there are many who argue that an extended school year will benefit students, opponents believe that additional time will not produce meaningful results.

Basics of TO

Thesis Statement: *Although there are many who argue that an extended school year will benefit students, opponents believe that additional time will not produce meaningful results.*

PRO-Topic Sentence

Details

Conclusion Sentence

CON-Topic Sentence

Details

Conclusion Sentence

Concluding Statement

MULTIPLE-PARAGRAPH OUTLINES (MPO)

Offers practice writing argumentative thesis statement that presents both sides of an argument and takes a position, with the author's position at the end of the statement. *"Although extending the school year has many drawbacks, its benefits outweigh them."*

Utilize the GST method (General statement, Specific statement, Thesis statement)

Develops a 4-5 paragraph MPO that lays out arguments to support the position, and also presents a counterclaim with evidence.

Multiple-Paragraph Outline (MPO)

THESIS STATEMENT:

Paragraph 1: Introduction: G, S, T

Paragraph 2: Background of issue with evidence to support thesis

Paragraph 3: Presents a counterclaim with evidence to support

Paragraph 4: Presents strongest evidence to support the thesis

Paragraph 5: Conclusion: T, S, G

Incorporating Evidence and Quotations

At Level 2, students will not be actually incorporating quotations and citations into their writing BUT they will start making notations as they summarize evidence.

As they progress to Level 3 writing, they can be taught how to use footnotes and references to evidence. To prepare for this, they can practice using a quotation of evidence to support their claim.

As they find ways to use quotes or paraphrase, they should practice using powerful verbs to indicate the authority of the work being quoted. Verbs such as endorses, asserts, emphasizes, and affirms are good examples.

Examples

Instead of:

Professor Clark said, “Programs like boot camps have been shown to be ineffective in preventing juvenile delinquency.”

Professor Clark, a nationally recognized expert on juvenile justice reform, endorses this view when she writes, “Programs like boot camps have been shown to be ineffective in preventing juvenile delinquency.”

Differentiation

Students may be at various levels within a classroom. Students who have developed strong skills in fact/opinion or pro/con, are prepared to begin utilizing the TO or MPO and writing stronger paragraphs.

All students should practice utilizing the GST, TSG method of creating their thesis, introduction and conclusion paragraphs.

As students begin to gain command of the MPO, they should begin practicing including paraphrase with footnote, quotes from material and eventually adding strong appositives and verbs to offer credibility to their writing.

Conclusion

Students should be given opportunities to develop a claim (thesis). This helps develop critical thinking and helps students understand the power of the written word.

Students need to learn how to use a variety of resources to glean evidence to support their claim. These can include the internet or written material (encyclopedias, books, magazines, newspapers).

Eventually, they must learn to use reasoning in order to build their argument, be prepared to defend it and understand another's viewpoint.

All of these skills will prepare our students for the future!