

K-8 Continuum for Assessing Opinion/Argument Writing

Dear Teachers,

This tool has been developed to help you understand, support and track your students' progress in what the Common Core refers to as "opinion and argument writing." You and your students may use more precise terms, referring to this general kind of writing as "persuasive letter writing," as "essay writing," as "editorial writing," as "review writing," and so forth. It helps to understand that all of these somewhat different kinds of writing are similar, and to realize that when you teach well, your students will progress along a fairly predictable pathway of development.

Prompting Students to Produce On-Demand Opinion Writing

The continuum can be used to assess work that is the result of rough drafts, revision, conferences, and adult coaching—and should be. But it is especially designed as a way to assess on-demand writing. In order for students' work to be compared, one with another, it is essential that the conditions in which the work is done be as consistent as possible across classrooms. Therefore, we have provided you with a prompt you can use to ask students to create a piece of on-demand writing. Please use only this prompt, exactly as it is written, and resist the urge to preface it with some fast pointers, or otherwise to provide further instruction, coaching, and explanation!

You may read the prompt with raised eyebrow, thinking, 'Really? I should say *this* to my six year olds?' We did initially write very different versions of the prompt for K-2 kids than that which we used for 3-8 writers. But there were lots of resulting problems because in fact, there will be sixth graders who produce texts that are level 4 (a level that is intended as at-standard for end-of-year first graders). And there will be first graders who produce writing at level 6 (that is, at a level intended for end-of-year third graders). In order for this to be a true continuum of writing, one in which the levels reflect abilities and not grade levels, we came to believe it is necessary that the work produced by different grade levels could fall anywhere on the spectrum, and that all the pieces at a given level be comparable because they result from essentially the same prompt. Hence, we have written one prompt that works, in a way, for Grades K-8. Granted, we know that most kindergartners will not take advantage of the planning time to collect facts and quotes to help make their argument, but the fact that students are invited to do this and do not do it is significant—especially when it is older students, not kindergartners, who make that decision.

The prompt is more detailed, more explanatory, than the assignments children will encounter on high-stakes tests. We won't learn much if students read the question, ask, "Huh?" and simply sit there—as a kindergartner would be apt to do with a prompt designed for a middle-school high-stakes test. Still, the prompt does require children to know *some* writing lingo. If they do not understand the terms that are in this prompt, it is true that this means they will not perform particularly well. Please don't solve this challenge by talking on and on about the assignment. Just give the prompt as it is written, and if the kids do not know how to proceed, let that be revealing. After you teach opinion writing, they'll have access to academic language related to this kind of writing and will demonstrate their knowledge and skills on the "post" assessment.

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The Prompt:

To be given the day before:

Think of a topic or issue that you know a lot about or that you have strong feelings about. Tomorrow, you will have an hour to write an opinion or argument text in which you will write your opinion and tell reasons why you feel that way. Use everything you know about essay writing, letter writing, speeches, and reviews. If you want to find and use information from a book or another outside source, you may bring that with you tomorrow. Please keep in mind that you'll have an hour to complete this.

To be given on the day of the assessment:

Writers, in fifteen minutes you will have a chance to do some opinion writing. Yesterday, you thought of an idea or an opinion that you have—one you have strong feelings about—and now is your chance to write to convince your readers of your opinion. You can't start the actual writing yet, but you do have 15 minutes to think about that writing, and get ready to do it. If you want to make notes, to take information from books or from people in the room or from anything else, you can do so—you just want to be sure that in 15 minutes, you will be able to write about your opinion in ways that convinces others.

(Then, after 15 minutes): So writers, now is the time to do an opinion piece of writing. Remember, you'll tell readers about an idea, an opinion, of yours—one you have strong feelings about. In your writing, write your opinion and convince your readers by telling them why you feel this way. Use everything you know about persuasive writing—including persuasive letter writing, persuasive review writing, persuasive essay writing (teachers, you can alter or add onto this list)—to make this your best opinion writing.

You have the choice to write in one of several kinds of booklets (hold up) or on single pages of writing paper (hold up).

How Much Time and Support Should Be Provided During On-Demand Writing?

The concept is that you set aside 65 minutes for this. It may be that the first 15 minutes need to be at a somewhat different time than the last 50 minutes, which is okay. Your students may very well not do anything to get ready—that is worth noting. Then, after you read the second part of the prompt, they will spend 50 minutes writing as best they can.

What Do You Do While Your Students Write?

As students write, be prepared to lightly prompt students whose work falls in levels 1-4. Studying the ways in which a small amount of lean coaching alters the performance of these especially novice writers will allow you to understand what all children, and especially kindergarten and first grade children, can do. Then, too, the Common Core calls for “guidance and support” at the very earliest levels (only). Remember, if different teachers provide different amounts of support, the assessment will no longer assess writing that students do under like conditions. Therefore, we ask teachers of students whose writing falls within levels 1-4 to carefully adhere to the following guidelines, only, and to refrain from providing additional help.

1. During the on-demand work, if there are individuals who have still not made an attempt at writing anything after five minutes, prompt each one of these writers once—only once—by crouching alongside the writer and saying, “Think of something that you have strong feelings about. Tell your opinion and tell why you feel this way.” Then say, “Go ahead, write and draw it as best you can.” Teachers, note that these prompts do not involve suggesting a topic!

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2. If a writer is busily drawing pictures without adding any letters or words, crouch alongside the writer and say, “I see you are making pictures to tell your opinion or idea. Could you also try writing the words that go with the pictures?”

3. After the writer reaches a stopping place in the on-demand assessment (not while he or she is still in the midst of work), ask, “If you wanted to make this the best piece you ever wrote, what might you do?” and then say, “Would you do that?” If possible, observe what the writer does to his/her text in response to your prompt so that you are able to recall later what parts of the text were done without prompting, and what parts were the result of prompting.

4. In classrooms where students are emergent writers or beginning English speakers, after writers have done their work, if you see that their work is not something you will be able to “read” later when the writer is not present, then you will want to record what the writer tells you he or she has written. Ask each writer, “What did you write? Can you read it to me?” and then record what the writer says on a separate note that can later be attached to the writer’s work.

Using This Continuum to Assess Students’ Levels of Proficiency at Opinion Writing

Once your students have finished the on-demand assessment, look over each piece of writing and ask yourself, “Which level is this piece mostly like?” Most teachers make this decision holistically, focusing mostly on the benchmark texts, and then looking more specifically at whether the piece matches most of the descriptors for writing at that level. No piece (including the benchmark pieces) will be apt to match every single characteristic of a particular level.

You may decide to note half-steps, assigning some writers a level such as 4.5. Remember, if you round high, then the chances of producing and showing progress as a result of teaching and learning become less—and both you and the writer will be heartened by evidence that your hard work produces progress. When you notice that a writer’s work is mostly at a level but doesn’t meet one or two of the criteria of that level, this gives you something to teach right away!

Align Your Teaching with Common Core Standards

The levels that we have described in this document align to the Common Core Standards—the ambitious levels that these standards call for can function as a rallying cry, helping you and your kids have high aspirations. The Common Core Standards would suggest that at the end of kindergarten, children should be able to produce, through on demand writing (without adult support), texts that match Level 3. Students’ texts should be one level higher each year (Level 4, then, should be what first graders can do at the end of the year). Those are ambitious standards, and it is unlikely that all your students will reach them until you and the teachers preceding you have ramped up your teaching—but now is a good time to do that!

Of course, good teachers always know that instruction begins where students are, and helps them move forward towards a crystal clear horizon. So, if your seventh graders are writing at Level 3, help them progress to Level 4, then to Level 5! We hope this document helps you to do that work.

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<p>Level 1</p>	<p>Several unrelated pictures, may or may not be representational, with oral commentary.</p> <p><i>NOTE: To preserve the record of the student's intended meaning, teachers record the child's description of the text, taking dictation.</i></p>
<p>Structure/Genre</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Treatment of Subject/Topic</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer makes a collection of pictures (or just one picture) that may be representational, but more often is not. ○ When asked to read the text aloud, the writer will most likely name what he or she has drawn (“Ice cream,” “Mommy”) or believes he or she has drawn (in cases when the picture is nonrepresentational). If prompted to say what he or she feels about the topic, the child may share a simple attribute (“It’s yummy”) or feeling (“I love Mommy”). ● <i>Organization/Focus/Cohesiveness of the Text</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If the pictures are representational, they will often be freestanding, telling about more than one, often unrelated, topic. That is, the pages may include a random assortment of pictures, e.g. a stick figure, an apple, a sun, or other icons the child knows how to draw. ○ If the pictures are nonrepresentational, and the teacher asks the child to ‘read’ the text aloud, the pictures still will tend not to be unified around one topic. That is, the child may say, “This is my mom, and this is a ball, and that’s me in school.” ● <i>Awareness of Genre</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer does not yet have a sense of genre. That is, the text the writer produces when given the opinion writing prompt is indistinguishable from the ones he or she produces when asked to write a story or an informational text.
<p>Elaboration/ Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The text, which is likely to be one or more pages of pictures, conveys a general topic (Mommy) rather than expressing an opinion. If the collection of pictures (or single picture) is not representational, the child’s commentary about it will also convey a topic, not opinion. If prompted, the child will likely elaborate by providing his or her feeling about the topic (“I love Mommy”). ● When asked to read his or her text, the writer might talk at great length about topics or feelings that seem unrelated, or, alternatively, may say little about the pictures at all. ● When a writer requires additional, light prompting to revise a piece, (see intro letter for prompt), he or she is apt to respond by adding to the drawing, making additional drawings, or saying

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	<p>more.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Often at this stage, when writers attempt to add more, the newer material strays from the original content of the text and may or may not actually add detail related to the original topic.
Concept of Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The child seems to believe that pictures convey words because when asked to do so, he or she “reads” the text, telling about the items in the picture(s). However, often the oral description doesn’t match the actual picture(s).● Even when asked to “write the words,” the child may not yet produce a written text, or even a string of approximated letters. Instead, the child may add more to his or her drawing.
Meaning/ Significance or Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The child may not yet write to communicate a meaning, or specific content. That is, instead of deciding upon a meaning and then working to capture that on the page, the child may make marks on the page for the sheer pleasure of making marks or to produce a drawing that he or she knows how to make (e.g. of a flower) deciding on a meaning for the text only when asked to ‘read’ it. The meaning may, in fact, change every time the child ‘reads’ the text.

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Level 2	<p>A collection of representational pictures related to a single opinion with accompanying writing or gestures toward writing</p> <p><i>NOTE: To preserve the record of the student's intended meaning, teachers record the child's description of the text, taking dictation.</i></p>
Structure/Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Treatment of Subject/Topic</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer uses a combination of representational drawing, oral language, and attempts at writing (either letters and words or approximations of these) to convey an opinion. ○ When asked to read the text aloud, the child produces an oral commentary that relates to the collection of pictures and text. ● <i>Organization/Focus/Cohesiveness of the Text</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The pictures, written text and accompanying oral commentary tend to be mostly related to one central idea or opinion and on the whole, represent an attempt to convey the writer's strong feeling about an idea or topic. ○ The writer most likely does not yet provide supporting reasons for an 'opinion.' Instead, the writer may supply facts or feelings (written or oral) that are tangentially related to the topic, which may or may not actually support the writer's opinion. For example, the text may say, "I like puppies. Puppies are small." ● <i>Awareness of Genre</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer has an early sense of genre. The text the child produces when asked to write an opinion piece is distinguishable from the text the writer produces when asked to write a story or a piece of informational writing. ○ The text suggests the writer has an early understanding that opinion or essay writing is idea-based. The writer uses phrases such as: "I like..." "I think..."
Elaboration/Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The text now conveys an opinion, idea or feeling, albeit a simple one, which tends to come from personal experience. (e.g. "Cupcakes. I like cupcakes. I like making yummy cupcakes...and eating them!") ● The writer often chooses to write in a booklet and 'reads' the first page as if it contains one sentence, then 'reads' the next page as if it contains the next sentence, etc. ● The drawings tend to be mostly related to the topic and many add detail that supports the writer's opinion (e.g. a particularly fun time had with his or her family). ● Often, the oral commentary that accompanies the pictures stays at the level of generalizations, and is expressed as a summary. For example, "I love Dora the Explorer because I love her", or "I like to jump because it is fun. Jumping is super cool."

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If asked, “If you wanted to make this the best piece you ever wrote, what might you do?” the writer is apt to add more specifics or details to the existing drawings, or to provide additional commentary that explains or otherwise adds onto whatever is on the paper. With prompting, the writer may add more labels/words. ● With guidance and support, the writer responds to questions and suggestions and adds details to strengthen writing as needed. For example, if asked, “Can you give reasons for your opinion that your family is the best?” the child might add that they “are fun” or “play games.” This elaboration is apt to be done verbally, and only with prompting.
Concept of Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The child’s approximated writing suggests he or she recognizes that writing is different than drawing. That is, the writer grasps the letter-like nature of writing. ● The text includes at least approximated written words, e.g. labels or captions on the drawings, and may also include letter strings at the bottoms of pages. ● The writer may or may not yet grasp the directionality of written English (left-to-right, top-to-bottom). Text may be comprised of mirror-letters or even entire mirror-words/phrases. ● The writer seems to believe that his or her approximated letters carry meaning because, at least when nudged to do so, he or she ‘reads’ the writing, and does not simply talk about the pictures.
Meaning/Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The child understands that written texts convey meaning and that opinion writing is a particular kind of writing that requires one to pick a topic or opinion, then draw and write to capture that on the page. The child demonstrates this awareness by doing both things. ● The child shows an awareness of the purposes for written language, and in particular, opinion writing—that it can be shared, read aloud, used to convey an idea or feeling, or otherwise published.

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Level 2 Sample A

Name KOLLEA

Date _____

Kids like you have strong feelings about different things.
Think about a topic that you have strong feelings about.
Write your feeling (or opinion) and tell why you feel this way.



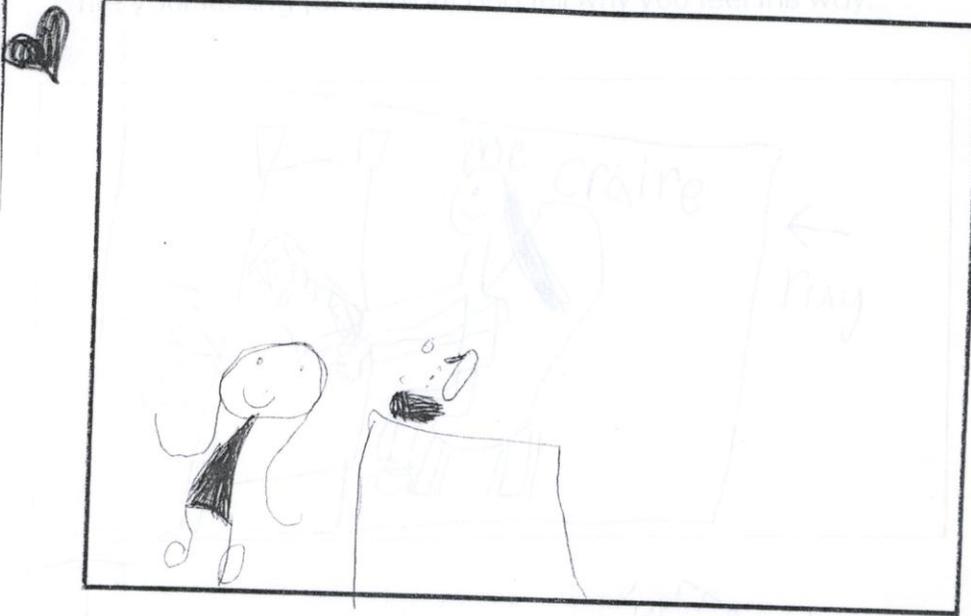
MOM SIS ME
DAD TIGER SIS

"I care about tigers because I don't like shooting them."

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**Level 2
Sample B**

Name Cherry



I like Wen I Mac
Cupac

I like Wpce in the
Cichin

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Level 3	Either an opinion, supported with a reason or an example, or a list of several opinions
Structure/Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Treatment of Subject/Topic</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer uses a combination of representational drawing, oral language and written language (either letters or words) to convey an idea or an opinion and to provide simple support. ○ When asked to read the text aloud, the child may read the words (or approximations of words) and provide accompanying oral comments that in fact relate to the work produced, both drawn and written. ○ Ideally, but not always, the text focuses on a one central opinion. ● <i>Organization/Focus/Cohesiveness of the Text</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As in the prior level, the pictures, written text and accompanying commentary tend to advance one central opinion. Now, the writer also gestures toward writing long and with support. ○ At this level, the writer tends to provide one or more reason or example to support his or her opinion (“My baby sister is cute. She’s little. She has curls. She blows kisses.”), or the writer may put forth several loosely related opinions (“I love my pet fish. I think fish are fun.”) ● <i>Awareness of Genre</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer seems to understand that his or her opinion statement is what the piece is ‘about’ and that the support(s) given are to help show why or how the opinion is valid. ○ The writer may use words such as “because” or “that’s why” to provide support for the claim.
Elaboration/ Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The text usually summarizes the writer’s opinion and provides reasons for the opinion. However, there may be more detail in the pictures and/or oral commentary than in the written words. ● If the writer writes in a booklet, typically each page contains a picture with an accompanying sentence or two. ● At this level, the picture tends to be an important means for conveying information that is not put into the written text. ● The support for the expressed opinion tends to come primarily from personal experiences, as in previous (and future) levels. ● Often the child will list one support for his or her opinion on each page. The writer may elaborate on some supports, but not others. ● While most of the information in the text is related to a particular opinion, the support might not appear to be well organized.

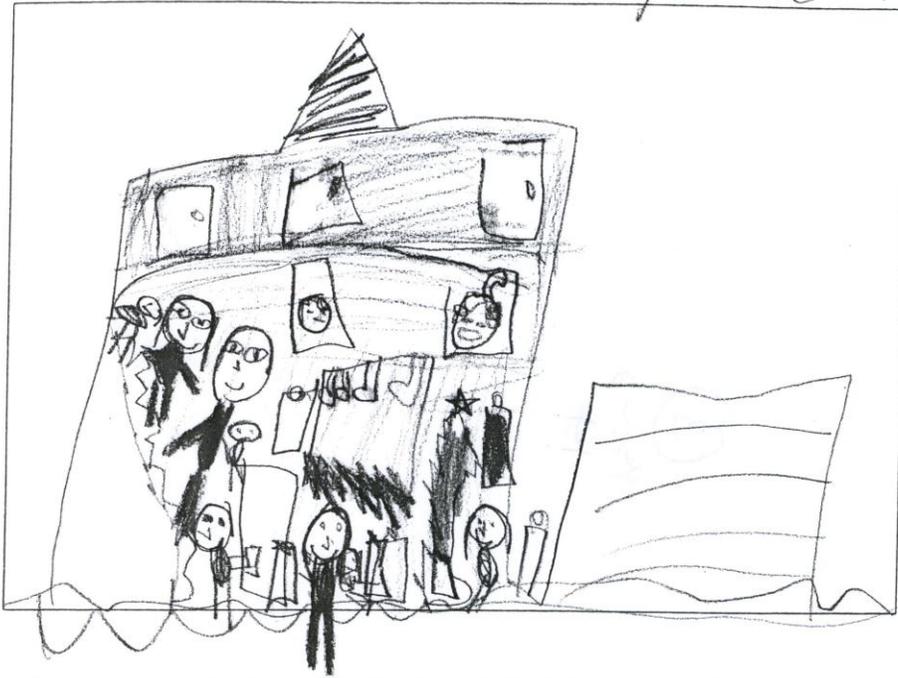
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	<p>Supports might seem out of order or overly repetitive (e.g. “My baby sister is cute. My mom says she’s cute. She has curls. She sucks her thumb.”)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As in Level 2, if asked, “If you wanted to make this the best piece you ever wrote, what might you do?” the writer is apt to add more detail to support his or her opinion. At this level, the writer will not only add more details to drawings, but will also include those details in the accompanying writing (the letters or word strings). The details are likely to be connected to the opinion.
<p>Concept of Writing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The written portion of this text now shows a grasp of directionality and probably shows also a sense of word, with more than one letter generally representing each word and with spaces between many of the words. ● The child can point to words as he or she reads, demonstrating some grasp of one-to-one correspondence.
<p>Meaning/Purpose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As at Level 2, the writer understands that writing is a way of expressing a personal opinion. He or she can decide upon an idea or opinion about which he or she has a strong feeling, then write and draw to capture that intended meaning on the page. ● The writer is growing toward an understanding that writing can be a way to persuade others or argue for issues of personal importance, as evidenced by the genre-specific language the writer uses. That is, while writing/reading the piece aloud, the writer often uses opinion-phrases to convey his or her feelings or judgments, such as “I like...”, “I think...” or ‘You should...’, ‘People should...’ or the fill-in-the-blank sentence: (<u>A person or a thing</u>) is (<u>a trait</u>) (e.g., ‘Recess is fun’ or ‘Mom is nice.’)

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**Level 3
Sample A**

by Sean



I love to have
Christmas with
my family. I like
the presents
and my family together
and the cookies.

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Level 3 Sample B

Kids like you have strong feelings about different things.
Think about a topic that you have strong feelings about.
Write your feeling (or opinion) and tell why you feel this way.



I Shud get las Home
Work So I can play
and have more fun.

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Level 4	An opinion that is supported by at least one reason or example and is elaborated upon
Structure/Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Treatment of Subject/Topic</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer uses words and pictures, and perhaps some oral commentary, to convey an opinion and to provide supporting examples or reasons. ○ At this level, the opinion is often apt to take the form of an argument for something the writer wants—a pet, recess every day. ○ The text introduces one main opinion and provides reasons for the opinion or instances when the opinion has held true and/or supporting information. ● <i>Organization/Focus/Cohesiveness of the Text:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ After stating an opinion, the text, both written and drawn, attempts to convince readers that this opinion is valid. To this end, the writer supplies some examples or details to support the opinion. ○ The writer gestures toward developing some of the reasons by not only naming the reason for the opinion in a phrase or a sentence, but by also adding some detail, information, or thought about that reason. For example, a writer at this level might write, “I like summer because I go to the beach and I like playing with my beach toys.” ○ The writer may gesture toward ending the text with a conclusion that provides some sense of closure, often in the form of a final summarizing statement or a concluding reaction to the information.
Elaboration/ Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Amount, Variety, and Selectivity of Information</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The text conveys the opinion and supporting information primarily through written words on the page. If the writer draws (as is typical at this stage but not always the case), he or she either sketches quickly in preparation for writing, or draws the pictures to accompany the writing—sometimes matching exactly what the words say, and sometimes not. ○ The child is apt to include more than one reason or example for his or her opinion (e.g. “I think we should have gym everyday because we can get good exercise. We can get to learn new games and get to do more thing that other kids can learn.”) ○ Likewise, rather than summarizing each reason or example in just one sentence, the text may include another sentence or two of elaboration, often extending an idea through the word “so” or “because.” However, instead of substantiating an opinion, the writer may

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	<p>instead restate the same idea several times, or state something that is somewhat off topic (“And the P.E. teacher is really nice and I really like him he’s nice.”)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As at previous levels, support for the child’s opinion comes primarily—and usually solely—from personal experiences, and may not be attached to any particular or premeditated sub-categories. Some support is reasons, some is “times when,” and some is tangential, loosely related information. ○ Sometimes, in an attempt to support a reason, the child references one instance, one small moment. However, rather than telling the <i>story</i> of that one instance, as higher level writers do, the writer <i>reports</i> that something was said or done (e.g. “We should get a playground because sometimes kids get bored and get in trouble when they are bored”). ○ While most of the information in the text is related to one particular opinion, the supports—the reasons or examples— may not be well organized so much as piled together. The child may have grouped some information together, but in other places the information may be out of order or repetitive.
<p>Concept of Writing/ Craft</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As at the previous level, the written portion of this text shows a grasp of directionality and now also a sense of word. Each word is generally represented by most of the letters that make it up (or by the ones the child hears in the word) and with spaces between nearly all of the words. ● There is evidence that the writer is aiming not only to convey an idea, opinion, or feeling, but to write it in a way that affects readers. For example, the writer may use direct address (“You should read this book. You will love it!). Other typical craft moves used by writers at this level might include using all caps, underlining, using a variety of punctuation, or using bold print to emphasize a point. ● The writer may seem to be approximating a persuasive tone of voice in his or her writing, perhaps repeating words (e.g. “I get so, so, so sad”) or using exclamation points to dramatize a sentence. However, in an on-demand writing exercise, this is likely to come more from his or her own desire to argue for something he wants (a new pet, more recess time) than from a clear zeal for persuading others about the general validity of the opinion. ● If a writer at this level uses linking or transition words, the words are apt to be simple ones (“and,” “so,” “because”) rather than sophisticated ones (‘On the other hand,’ ‘That is,’

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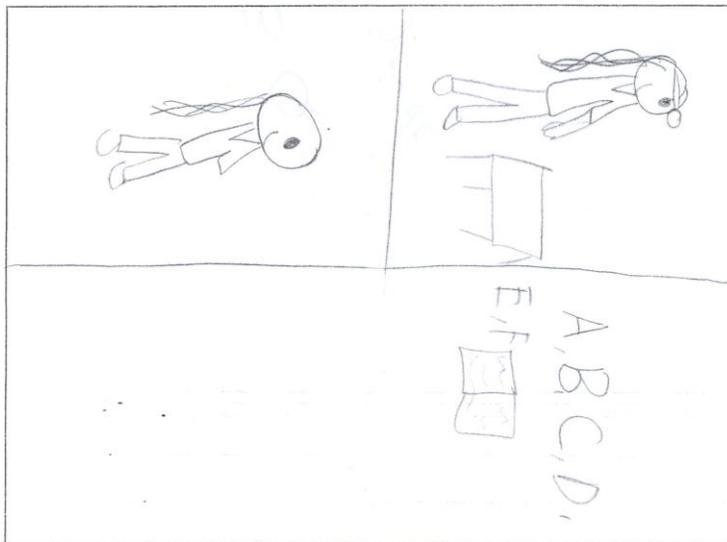
	<p>‘Meanwhile,’ etc.) that appear later. Moreover, the writer will use transition words within a single sentence or section of text (e.g., “I think we should have gym every day <i>because</i> we can get good exercise”) rather than to connect two sections of thought.</p>
Meaning/Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Unlike earlier levels where the writing conveys the assumption that the reader will agree with the opinion, idea, or feeling expressed, at this level there is evidence that the writer understands that he or she may use writing to argue for an issue of personal importance. (e.g. “Some people think kids should just work in school. I think they should get time to play.”)● The writer often assumes that the audience is already familiar with the topic, person, item, book or other subject being written about. The writer may refer to games, people, places and other personal knowledge without any further description or explanation (for example, “I love to play D.D.R.” or “Silly bandz are awesome.”) The writer does not yet take into account that a reader may need further description, explanation, or context in which to find the argument relevant.

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Level 4
Sample A

Name Samantha Zheng

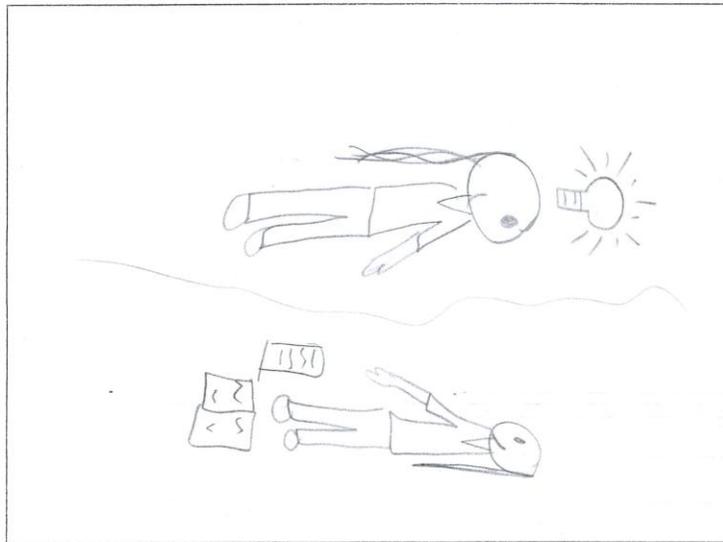
I like homework because
if you don't do it when
you grow up you will not
get a job it makes you
smart, it makes you learn
something new, it makes
your level bigger.



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Name Samantha Zheng

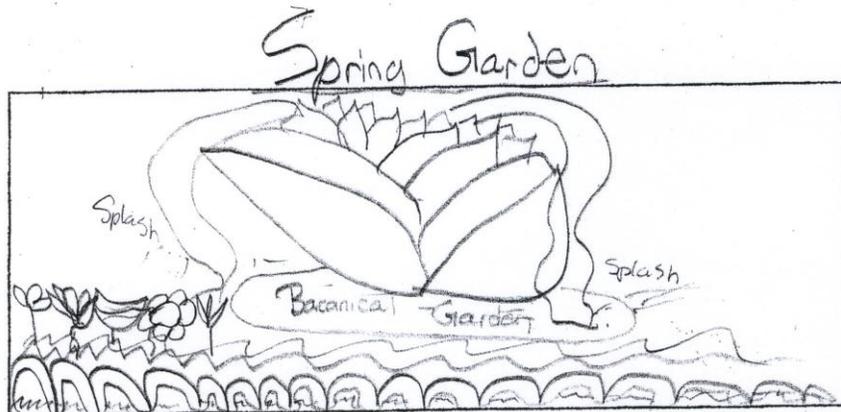
I like homework because
it makes you have more
ideas, it makes you know
more things.



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Level 4
Sample B

Name Samra A. Date 1-7-16



If you want the best
Spring ever go to this
amazing Spring garden called
bacanical garden. You should
go to bacanical garden
is it has a water spout
flower and you can take
a picture. This garden is
in brant NYC. Another reason why you
should go to bacanical garden is that
they have beautiful flowers.

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Level 5	An opinion that is supported by several reasons or examples, and includes some elaboration
Structure/Genre	<p><i>Treatment of Subject/Topic</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As with the prior level, the writer conveys an opinion and gives several supporting examples or reasons. Each section of supporting material is more developed than at the previous level, though often one supporting example will be further elaborated on than others. ○ While topics are still mostly grounded in the writer’s own experience, writers at this level may tackle topics that feel more universal than just their own experiences or observations (e.g. “It is important to have doctors because when you’re sick they help you get better.”) <p><i>Organization/Focus/Cohesiveness of the Text:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prior to stating an opinion, the writer is apt to write an introductory sentence or two. This statement is usually an effort to engage the reader. It might ask a question that is related to the topic, such as, “You know what my favorite holiday is? It’s Halloween.” Or “You are probably asking yourself, ‘Why would I eat vegetables?’” ○ The writer begins to group his or her discussion of reasons (or other support material) into sub-categories, although the categories seem to have emerged during the process of writing and not before. That is, there is not apt to be an indication that the writer planned the categories and designed their order (for example, through the use of a previewing sentence). ○ The writer may attempt to distinguish between different parts of his or her argument by writing each section on a different page or by using paragraphs to separate some of the different parts of the argument, though not consistently. ○ The writer may begin to use transitional phrases to shift from one part of the text to another, distinguishing one example or reason from another. These phrases may be, “One reason…” and “Another reason…” or “One time…” and “Another time” or any combination thereof, though the writer is not apt to use these consistently, if at all. ○ If the writer segments the text into categories, the categories will not always be parallel in weight or

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	<p>treatment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer may write a concluding statement at the end of the text, which is unlikely to review any specific content in the text or to extend the it, but instead is apt to restate the introduction and send the reader away from the topic (e.g. “This is why you should feel strongly about space travel!”).
<p>Elaboration/ Development</p>	<p><i>Amount and Variety of Details</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In an effort to elaborate, the writer may state a reason for his or her opinion, and then restate the reason another time or two. Alternatively, the writer may state a reason and give an instance when that held true. ○ Even when invited to plan for the writing by accessing reference materials and outside resources, the writer will still predominately uses personal experience to support his or her opinion, citing times in which he or she encountered, saw, or did something related to the claim. ○ Alternatively, some writers at this level will try to support an opinion by telling a story of “One time when...,” but these writers often end up embedding such a long narrative into the text that this narrative swamps the opinion-stance, making it seem as if the writer is not able to distinguish between narrative and opinion writing. <p><i>Authority of Information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In an attempt to prove his or her point, the writer may begin to casually incorporate outside knowledge from social, print or digital sources (e.g. “My dad is a doctor and he says it’s important to get help when you are sick” or “I read in a book that doctors save lives all the time”), though this will be done sparsely, if at all. <p><i>Selectivity of information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is not yet a sense of selectivity in the details the writer incorporates, but rather a sense that the writer is listing all that he or she knows to support an opinion. <p><i>Elaboration</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When the writer elaborates on a reason by citing an example from personal experience, that example is usually summarized in a single sentence or two (e.g., “When I got hurt the doctor took care of me and then after a while I was all better.”). ○ The writer will likely elaborate more fully on some reasons and less on others.

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<p>Craft</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The writer demonstrates a beginning awareness of audience, sometimes addressing the reader with the word “you.” The tone may be conversational (“Do you think this is fair?”) or include quips (“...and this just is not fair!”). ● Writers at this level may begin to write with greater fluency and conversational quality, thus generating a text that seems to have voice and is often more animated. Sometimes this voice will take the form of asides (“No lie!”) and often the piece will be dotted with exclamation marks, giving the text a conversational feel. ● The writer may use simple linking words with more frequency (“and,” “so,” “because,” “another”) to connect opinions and reasons, though not with great variety and often in a way that sounds repetitive rather than seamless. The result is a series of run-ons, with linking words used to nudge the reader to read on. ● The writer will continue to predominately list examples and supports for his or her opinion. He or she may, however, begin to include details that convey <i>how</i> something is said and done, or to develop information by using details that show instead of tell (e.g. “Littering makes the street look ugly. When I walk with my mom she says, ‘Look at all this trash!’”) This work will be done sporadically and in limited ways, if at all.
<p>Meaning/ Purpose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The writer has a greater sense of the purposes for writing, and specifically, of the fact that opinion writing is meant to persuade readers. ● Occasionally, writers at this level may argue for or against something that affects a wider audience than themselves (e.g., “You need doctors”), but more often than not the topic will be one that focuses on their own personal experience and opinions (e.g., “I like chocolate,” “California Pizza Kitchen is the best!”) ● The writer’s opinion is likely to be fairly black and white, with little recognition of a gray area (e.g. “Dogs are the best pets ever!”)

K-8 Continuum for Assessing Opinion/Argument Writing

**Level 5
Sample A**

Tsering Dhandup
10/7/10

Tsering
P.S. 199

October 7, 2010

Chocolate, Chocolate,
CHOCOLATE!

You are probably asking to yourself: "Why would I eat vegetables?" I like chocolate. Tania likes chocolate. Every kid in the world likes chocolate.

One reason I like chocolate is because it is so SWEET! I wish anyway, I would get a pack of all those sweet candy. No lie!

The second reason I like chocolate is because chocolate is the most popular flavor in the WHOLE earth. Even space!

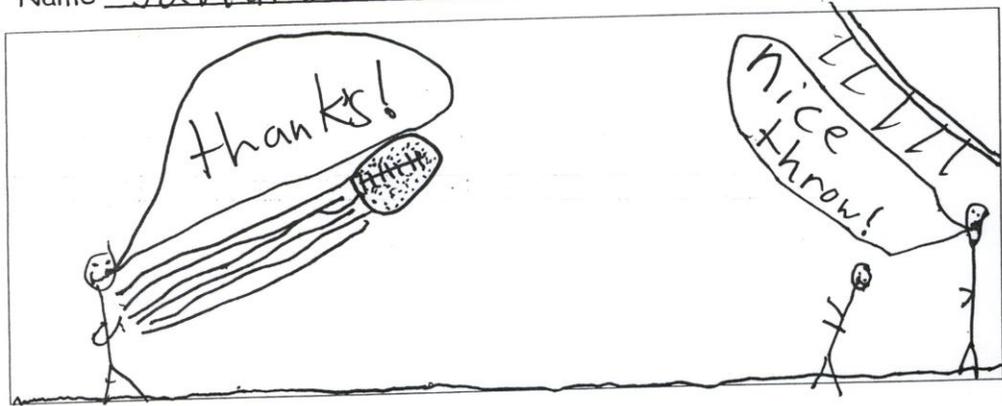
The final reason I love chocolate is because the chocolate is made from the candy company/factory. That is my favorite place.

I am so lucky, because my mother buys me anything I want. I really hate it, when my mom wants me to eat my vegetables.

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Level 5
Sample B

Name Sandro Date _____



I feel strongly about,
my friend, because he is
very nice too me. He gives
me toys, he always dose
what I want. I always tell
funny jokes, He laughs. And
sometimes he makes me

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K-8 Continuum for Assessing Opinion/Argument Writing

Name _____

Date _____



laugh. When ever we play a
game he sais, "good game!"
even if I win. We were pals
sence first grade and he
was nice to me, and I was
nice to him. We usally go
in his room, and do somethin

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FST 653 Smart Start Writing Paper SW ©

K-8 Continuum for Assessing Opinion/Argument Writing

Name _____ Date _____



fun. ~~Or~~ If we're tired we'll
just watch t.v. And then
I have to go home. I get in
bed and dream of how
much good times we had.

K-8 Continuum for Assessing Opinion/Argument Writing

Level 6	An opinion that is supported by several reasons or examples, and includes more consistent elaboration and structure
Structure/Genre	<p><i>Treatment of Subject/Topic</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer makes a claim, named in a clear thesis statement, and provides several reasons or examples to support his or her opinion. ○ As with the prior level, a typical claim at this level might focus on the writer’s likes, dislikes or hopes (e.g., “You should not be a bully”) or occasionally on a more universal topic (“Bullying hurts people.”) <p><i>Organization/Focus/Cohesiveness of Piece</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer might introduce the essay by providing a lead or connecting statement as a sort of drum roll around the topic. For example, the writer might ask and answer a question: “Do you know what the best class in school is? It’s P.E!” Or the writer might give a brief anecdote or tell about a time he thought about the topic: “One time I was all alone at home with nothing to do. I thought to myself, if I had a sibling, I could have more fun.” ○ The writer may state a claim and give reasons upfront (e.g. “Recess is the best period because you can talk to your friends, relax, and get some exercise.”), suggesting he or she has planned for the basic structure of writing before beginning. ○ The writer uses paragraphs more consistently to differentiate between the various parts of his or her essay, and related ideas are grouped together into cohesive sub-categories, though there may be one or two instances where this focus is lacking. ○ While some writers at this level will give equal weight to each reason, others may give reasons or examples that are not parallel in weight, treatment, or nature. For example, the bulk of the piece may address one reason that supports the claim and then address other reasons only briefly. Other writers may address one reason in one section and then two or three reasons in another. ○ The writer makes an attempt to use linking words and phrases (“because,” “therefore,” “since,” “for example”) to connect reasons and evidence or opinions and reasons, which make the reasons feel cohesive on an individual level, even if the statements do not go together as easily as the linking words seem to suggest. ○ The writer provides a concluding statement or section which either simply repeats or rephrases the argument, or is loosely or tangentially related to the topic (“Having P.E. with Mr. Adams is the best!”).

K-8 Continuum for Assessing Opinion/Argument Writing

Elaboration/ Development	<p><i>Amount and Variety of details</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is often a feeling of homogeneity to much of the information the writer draws upon. That is, the author includes some examples, some anecdotes, or some definitions, but does not yet provide a tapestry of varied support material. The writer will continue to rely predominately on personal experience for evidence. ○ If the writer does include information from secondary sources, it is likely that he or she has not synthesized, reorganized, or digested the information. The writer may drop in a statistic or fact without connecting it to the other information around it or elaborating on the information's significance. <p><i>Authority of Information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer at this level may recognize the need for secondary references but her effort to identify and incorporate these within a piece of on-demand writing will be undeveloped or absent altogether. When invited to access reference materials and resources and when provided with preliminary preparation time in which to do this, the writer likely turns to the resource material. However, this secondary information will often be inserted randomly into the piece. It may not connect with the main argument or evidence it intended to support. <p><i>Selectivity of Information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer is beginning to be selective about the information included, moving away from writing everything he or she has felt and experienced about the subject. ○ The more effective writer at this level tempers his or her ability to write with volume by appearing to select from all available support information and choosing examples that are especially relevant. It is not uncommon for a writer to exercise his or her ability to write and generate ideas quickly, creating texts which still detail too much about what the writer thinks and feels about a topic. <p><i>Elaboration</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If the writer includes multiple examples or pieces of information to support a reason, the information does not tend to be organized logically, but instead seems to be placed in the section randomly, almost as a journey of thought. In this way it is organized, but not necessarily logically structured (e.g. putting the most compelling evidence first or saving it for the end) ○ Further supportive text for the topic introduced may be located elsewhere in the text but might not be grouped with the related topic. ○ After introducing a reason for his or her claim, the writer
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K-8 Continuum for Assessing Opinion/Argument Writing

	<p>produces several sentences of supportive text. In an attempt to say more, the writer commonly uses lists (items, characteristics, examples, etc.) to elaborate on a particular point or points. Occasionally, these lists are not parallel in structure or perhaps there are some items presented in the list that do not support the claim.</p>
<p>Craft</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As with level five pieces, texts at this level will tend to have a conversational quality as the writer attempts to write with voice. The writer may ask and answer questions, may take on a know-it-all stance, or may use an overabundance of exclamation points, creating a breathless quality. These techniques may be intended to hook the reader or to write “well”, however often the effect is a breezy or brash tone. ● The writer may use authorial asides (e.g. “That’s weird!”) as a way to process information within the text or relate to the reader, or he or she may use descriptive details, action words, or direct-address to the reader. These uses of craft elements may not be particularly effective (they often create a breezy, conversational tone) but the effort to try to balance being informative, organized and also lively is an important step forward. ● The writer will often use repetition at this level, repeating his or her opinion again and again throughout the piece for emphasis and clarity. ● The writer does not yet “unpack” pieces of evidence by showing how they are connected to each other, to a supporting reason, or to the overall claim. ● Sometimes the writer retells a story to make a point. This generally adds zest and specificity to the text, but as in the previous level, the effort to do this sometimes causes challenges—growing pains—for the writer. If the story is written in some detail, this adds life to the piece but can also mean that the story can overwhelm the claim and reasons, dwarfing them and blurring the distinction between narrative and opinion writing.
<p>Meaning/Purpose</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pieces at this level often feel like the writer assumes the reader shares an enthusiasm for the same topic simply because they are reading it. In other words, the writer does not do much beyond possibly using a “hook” device in the introduction or a bit of reflection at the end to impart significance to the reader and persuade him or her to agree with the claim. ● As with the previous level, the writer’s stance is fairly black and white, with little recognition of a gray area.

K-8 Continuum for Assessing Opinion/Argument Writing

Level 6 Sample A

Name: Angela Jenkins
School: P.S. 19 SI

Task: Think of a subject on which you have strong opinions. Write an opinion piece/essay that tells your opinion and supports it with reasons and information.

How do you want to know what my opinion is?
well here it is my strong opinion is that winter is
the best season in the world. I think winter is the
best season in the world is because, of a very special holiday,
spending time with family, and many other things.

Here's one reason why winter is the best season in the
world is because, of one special holiday called "CHRISTMAS!"
because, you can eat great food, get presents, and most of
all is spending time, and having fun with your family.

The second reason is because, of "HAPPY NEW
YEARS!" spending time with family, and friends, and
playing games, and waiting for the clock to strike down,
and hearing everybody saying "5, 4, 3, 2, 1! HAPPY NEW
YEARS!"

The third reason is because, once you
see a snowflake, and a lot of snow outside of the wind-
ow you wake up your parents beg them can you go
outside and they say "yes" you hurry up and put on your
hat, boots, mittens, scarf, and your jacket run down stairs
and out the door and jump around and make a snow
angel, throw snowballs at people, try to make a snowman
and last but not least wait for a snowflake to fall on
your nose or tongue, and let it sit there, and
melt on your nose or tongue, and have a big bright

K-8 Continuum for Assessing Opinion/Argument Writing

smile. The fourth reason is because, in the winter you can always have fun because, of many things like a special holiday, a special new year, and a special time at a special place, and day, and last but not least a very special moment with your family.

The fifth reason which is the last reason is because, of spending time with your family, having fun, having very special moments with your family and having a great time in the winter.

K-8 Continuum for Assessing Opinion/Argument Writing

**Level 6
Sample B**

Travelers

Virgin airlines is my favorite airlines, you are always entertained. They fly long and short distance, the walls sometimes change colors, which makes it a great airline.

On Virgin airlines you're always entertained. They have tv's, the channels are good no matter how old you are, there are movies for all ages, too. Seat belt sign is almost always off, which is good because if your bored you can get something from your bag from the overhead bin.

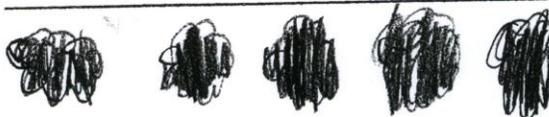
Virgin airlines gives out lots of free stuff. All of their snacks are free. Drinks are free too. In the beginning they give you snacks including pretzels, cookies, and fruit. If your hungry in the middle of the flight they will give you a platter of

K-8 Continuum for Assessing Opinion/Argument Writing

something my favorite's the cheese
platter

Some planes on Virgin airlines
have their walls change colors, colors
like blue, yellow, purple, pink, and red
this is good if you like to read
because there is always light
for you to see the words.
I remember being on a plane
and searching for the lights that
make the colors change.

there are lots of reasons
why I like Virgin airlines,
I definitely give it 5 clouds
with entertainment, walls that change
colors, I love flying on Virgin
air lines.

 5 clouds

K-8 Continuum for Assessing Opinion/Argument Writing

Level 7	An opinion that is supported by several reasons and supporting examples, anecdotes, facts or details.
Structure/Genre	<p><i>Treatment of Subject/Topic</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer makes a claim and groups examples, anecdotes, facts and/or details to support that claim. ○ The writer sometimes tucks information into the discussion of these reasons in order to rebuff alternate arguments (e.g. “Some people think kids should study all day. I think they should have time to exercise, too.”) ○ Instead of being grounded solely in the writer’s personal experience, claims, or opinions, pieces at this level may sometimes address topics that feel more universal, e.g. ones that address the concerns of a community (school uniforms) or ones that address a social issue (the environment). <p><i>Organization/Focus/Cohesiveness of Piece:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As in previous levels, the writer provides some kind of introductory sentence or section that orients the reader to his or her claim. (For example, “I’ve always loved leopard geckos.”) Sometimes the writer might provide a brief lead-in to hook readers and entice them to read on. (For example, “Do you hate math? I bet you do.” or “These days way too many people pollute, and guess what, that is not just killing animals.”) At this level, the introduction will be more developed, often forecasting the major supports for his or her claim or the general structure of the essay. ○ The writer attempts to support his or her stance with well-organized information and reasons. Subtopics will tend to be more parallel in weight than they were at previous levels, although the writer may still give some ideas a disproportionate amount of coverage. Facts and details are grouped in ways that generally make sense, although the connections between them may not be explicitly stated. ○ It appears that the writer has planned the structure, perhaps putting the strongest support in the beginning (“First and foremost...”) or saving it for last (“But most of all...”). ○ The writer often uses transitional phrases in the second

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	<p>or third body paragraphs that suggest he or she is attempting to build the upcoming subsection upon the shoulders of the last. The writer might, for example, preface the first body paragraph with ‘One reason...’ and then preface the next body paragraph with, ‘Another reason...’ and then third with, ‘Perhaps the most important reason is...’</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer consistently uses paragraphs to differentiate reasons or sub-sections of ideas. ○ The writer will also use transitional words to link reasons and examples with phrases like ‘in addition,’ ‘for instance,’ and ‘in order to.’ ○ The writer provides a concluding statement or section related to the opinion presented. As in level six, the statement may refer back to the main opinion by repeating it or rephrasing it. Or, the writer might address the reader in a general way (e.g. “I hope you agree with me!” or “Remember, it’s important to recycle”). The writer might also add a call to action (e.g. “Remember, if you get the opt-out sheets, fill them out.”)
<p>Elaboration/ Development</p>	<p><i>Amount and Variety of Details</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer may use a variety of details including facts, definitions of important terms or ideas, quotations, anecdotes, or other related examples to support the claim, though he or she may continue to rely heavily on one or two kinds of details (for example, he or she may rely mostly on life experiences and anecdotal evidence to support the claim). <p><i>Authority of Information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Writers at this level are beginning to include more specialized, domain-specific information. When talking about the treatment of elephants in zoos, the writer might say, “Elephants are tormented and abused and hooked like fish, even in their ears, which are the most sensitive parts of their body.” ○ The writer, when given the opportunity to do so, will lean more heavily on outside sources as a way to bolster the claim, but many of the references may not be synthesized or incorporated seamlessly into the writing. ○ The writer may analyze the validity of her own anecdotal evidence, showing some understanding that his or her

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	<p>experience is, in fact, limited to the perspective of just one person. This idea may not be fully fleshed out, but may sound something like, “I’m just one person, but in my experience, soccer is the best sport ever.”</p> <p><i>Selectivity of Information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer demonstrates an awareness that he or she is addressing one slant on a topic. (e.g. “Some people might agree with me that Facebook and Skype could keep you in contact with family and friends around the world, but other people might think differently from my opinion.”) and chooses details that bolster his or her particular claim. ○ In addition to selecting information that will support his or her claim, the writer might select one or more pieces of evidence that <i>oppose</i> his or her main argument. However, the writer will immediately refute these pieces of evidence as valueless and absolutely wrong, falling short of successfully countering opposing views with logic, examples, or cited research. He may say, “Some people believe zoos help animals by giving them a home, but that’s just not true! They are just like prisons!” <p><i>Elaboration</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ After introducing each reason for his or her opinion, the writer produces substantially more supportive text than at previous levels. He or she may give several examples to support a reason or elaborate on one example with great detail.
Craft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The writer will continue to demonstrate an awareness of audience. He or she may continue to use the word “you” or pose rhetorical questions. ● When giving information from outside sources, the writer tends to loosely summarize the overarching ideas in a source (“According to Animal Planet, cheetahs are really fast”), rather than finding specific details to quote or paraphrase. He or she might struggle to smoothly link the ideas of the cited text with his or her own ideas. The cited text will likely interrupt the tone and voice of piece. Cited texts might be inappropriately lengthy and/or detract from the main argument. ● The writer will utilize known craft moves for the purposes of persuading his or her reader, and will do this with more consistency than at previous levels. For instance, when seeking

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	<p>to prove that people should take better care of their pets, the writer might use descriptive detail to recount the sight of a dirty, unkempt dog or dialogue to show the way a dog owner yelled at his or her pet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The writer may begin to experiment with literary devices such as metaphor or simile in the introduction or conclusion (e.g. “Bam! You’re locked behind a metal gate like a prisoner. This is what it feels like to be an animal in a zoo.”) ● The writer continues to write in a conversational tone, although sections of the piece may feel rigid and overly formal as he attempts the new work of referencing outside sources, using domain-specific language, and incorporating literary devices.
Meaning/Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The writer shows awareness of his or her audience, addressing them directly and trying to engage them in some parts, but there is still a sense that the writer does not seem to anticipate the audience’s thoughts or consider that the audience might not be easily convinced of his or her beliefs. ● There is an increasing sense that the writer has chosen a topic about which he or she has a strong opinion, and which carries a larger significance in his or her life. ● There is evidence that the writer has investigated a topic and has gathered some relevant information to build knowledge in support of his or her opinion. That is, the writer sees his or her life experiences as just one source from which to gather evidence, but also knows that content areas, books, media, and other sources can bolster a claim and provide more authoritative support for a claim.

K-8 Continuum for Assessing Opinion/Argument Writing

Level 7 Sample A

P.5150a

Abeyaz Amir
1/22/10

NO UNIFORMS

Uniforms are a very bad idea. Uniforms aren't a good idea because they don't let you express your self. It also isn't good because the uniform colors may not look good on you. Another reason is that you won't be able to set yourself apart from others. The last reason is that uniforms are expensive, now a days.

Uniforms are not good because they don't let you express your own personalities and they make you look kind of DULL. If you love wearing Yellows, Purples, Greens and Blues, uniforms will give YOU the blues.

Uniforms are also terrible because they may not look very good on you. For instance, The color blue might not go with your skin color and you might will look weird all day.

Another reason why uniforms aren't good is because you won't be able to set your self apart from the others. You might mistake your best friend with another person.

Finally, UNIFORMS ARE EXPENSIVE! Uniforms now a days are very expensive, for example, just my uniform shirt was \$12.50! That's alot!

K-8 Continuum for Assessing Opinion/Argument Writing

All in all uniforms are bad.
With non-personality expressing
quality, assorted colors, identical
features and skyrocketing prices,
uniforms should not be chosen.
Remember, if you get the opt-out
sheets, fill them out.

75
12

K-8 Continuum for Assessing Opinion/Argument Writing

Level 7 Sample B

Kyra

Television Shouldn't Be Over Watched

My strong opinion is that kids shouldn't watch too much television. Other people shouldn't too. I believe this is true because then you will have more time to study for a good education. Also, some shows on television are bad for kids to watch. Another reason this is true is that if you watch too much television, you will get bad eyesight.

The first reason I will explain is that you will have more time to read and study if you're not always watching television. Then, you are more likely to do well on tests and get a good education. Education is important because if you do well in school, you will be able to get a good job and then you'll be able to buy a house and food so you don't starve. Education is important and so is not watching too much television.

An additional reason my opinion is true is that some shows on television are bad for kids to watch. Younger children might be scared of some shows. This is bad because then stuff that reminds them of the scary show might make them cry. Also, some shows weren't made for children to watch but they may not know that and watch it anyway.

The last reason I will tell you about why people shouldn't watch too much television is that then you might

K-8 Continuum for Assessing Opinion/Argument Writing

develops bad eyesight. I have learnt before that staring at things like computer screens or televisions for a while can damage your eyes. You need your eyes to see other cars on the street and traffic lights. If you couldn't see those you might get in an accident. Also, you need good eyesight to read important information like what to do if there is a fire in the building. If you didn't know that information you could get hurt.

Even though I agree that television can be very entertaining and fun, too much of it can be very bad. I'm sure you now agree that this is true. So, if you want a good education, a healthy mind, and good eyesight, I would advise you to make sure that you're not always sitting on the couch with your eyes glued to a television screen.

K-8 Continuum for Assessing Opinion/Argument Writing

Level 8	A piece that is logically structured and has a wide variety of supporting information.
Structure/Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Treatment of Subject/Topic:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer has a clearly stated claim and is purposeful about structuring the essay, logically grouping ideas to support his or her opinion. ○ The writer introduces a topic or text clearly before stating an opinion. At the start of the essay, the writer is apt to orient the reader to a general topic, as if doing so to prepare the reader for the writer’s opinion. The effect is often that the introductory paragraph is designed like an inverted triangle, moving from a broader statement to the writer’s focused claim. ○ The reasons that the writer develops over the course of the text tend to be parallel (or almost parallel) and each addresses a different aspect of the claim. For example, an essay written to show the major ways in which dogs increase human happiness may include paragraphs on pets as helpers and pets used for therapy and will not include a paragraph on how pets can help around the house. ● <i>Organization/Focus/Cohesiveness of Piece:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ At the start of the essay, the writer is apt to orient the reader to a general topic so as to prepare the reader for his or her claim, perhaps including examples, statistics, anecdotes, or high-interest background information that introduce the topic. ○ Both within and across sections, there is a sense of burgeoning logic to the writing. Within sections, the writer has attempted to organize ideas and information in a way that best supports that particular reason. For example, the writer may choose to organize the information chronologically, or he or she may begin with the most impactful information first, or perhaps save it for last. Additionally, the writer has organized the sections/reasons themselves with some logic, perhaps organizing them so that one builds on another. ○ The writer uses more sophisticated transition words to link opinions and reasons using words, phrases, and clauses (e.g. consequently, specifically, on the other

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	<p>hand).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The facts and details in each subsection of the essay are overtly linked to one another. ○ The facts and details in one subsection are sometimes linked back to reasons and evidence from earlier subsections. The writer may use terms such as, “Like the..., the....” or “Earlier we saw that...., now we have a second reason...” ○ The writer provides a concluding statement or section related to the claim or opinion presented. In the concluding statement, the writer often recaps the entire piece, perhaps by restating his or her opinion and summarizing his or her reasons. The writer may conclude by placing the argument in a larger context and/or showing why the argument presented is important. He or she may do this by providing solutions to a problem or by suggesting that if readers are persuaded they might take action. (For example, “Remember, if we all use less water and recycle, we can help save the planet” or “Using less water is just one small way we can all do our part.”)
<p>Elaboration/ Development</p>	<p><i>Amount and variety of details</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As in level 7, the writer may use a variety of details including facts about the subject, definitions of important terms or ideas, quotations, or other examples related to the topic. ○ In addition to the types of sources included at previous levels, there is increasing evidence that the writer is drawing on information from a wider variety of sources, such as print and digital sources, and literary or informational texts, where applicable. <p><i>Authority of information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Writers at this level are beginning to include more specialized, domain-specific information, including higher-level vocabulary words. For example, the writer who claims that dogs increase human happiness might include terms such as <i>canine</i>, <i>companion</i>, and <i>welfare</i>. ○ The writer likely references outside sources in order to add credibility to the writing. When citing sources, the writer will have synthesized, re-organized, or digested the information only slightly, if at all. In an attempt to incorporate this cited text, the writer may produce writing that moves awkwardly from one tone of voice to another.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer informally references authors and sources used as evidence. For example, the writer might say, “An article I read about zoos said some animals are treated poorly.” <p><i>Selectivity of information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer notes different points of view or perspectives represented. The writer seems to have selected evidence from sources that represent a point of view that supports the writer’s claim. <p><i>Elaboration</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When elaborating on outside sources, though imperfectly, the writer will analyze and discuss the validity of these sources, explaining how an author uses reasons and evidence to support particular points in a text (e.g. “The author gives many examples of the poor treatment of animals in zoos. He discusses... and also...”). A writer might also note whether or not the information comes from an expert and whether the evidence is based on the experiences of one or many people. ○ When drawing on personal experiences as evidence, the writer will not only elaborate on specific examples to support his or her claim, but will connect those examples clearly and purposefully back to the main argument.
<p>Craft</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● When including evidence from outside sources, the writer either quotes the text directly or paraphrases in detail. When the writer paraphrases, she does so by attempting to summarize key points from texts. ● The writer may acknowledge a counter argument as a way to recognize possible opposing points of view and sway readers who might hold these points of view. If the writer does this, he or she may use transitions such as “nevertheless,” “but,” “however,” “despite this” in order to distinguish the counter argument from his or her claim. ● The writer orders evidence not only to be logical but also to be particularly persuasive or evocative. Thinking, for instance, “How do I want to lure my reader in, and what do I want to leave him or her with?” ● The writer connects ideas and information with increasingly sophisticated transition words and phrases, such as “consequently” and “specifically.” ● There is a sense that the writer is attempting to appeal to the reader’s emotions. To do this, the writer may insert gripping anecdotes taken from research, or may include words that evoke emotions, such as “horrifying”, “magnificent”, “cruel”, or

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	<p>“sickening”. The writer often does this in the conclusion by calling the reader to take action or to recognize the larger significance of an issue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The writer angles information to support his or her argument. For example, to support the claim “dogs increase human happiness,” the writer may include a story about his or her grandparents getting a dog, angling the story to show how getting a pet helped the grandparents to feel less lonely, increasing their happiness. ● The writer may use literary devices such imagery, simile, metaphor, and symbolism, albeit with some clumsiness. ● The writer may use surprising, high-interest, or provocative statistics. He or she may cite specific resources for these (e.g. “Did you know that thousands are left parentless because of smoking related diseases?”) ● The writer attempts to establish a tone that is appropriate to the piece, although the tone may not be consistent throughout.
Meaning/Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The writer demonstrates a strong awareness of audience, aiming to persuade, convince or win readers over. ● There may be a sense that the writer has chosen a claim that he or she feels strongly about or about which the writer has a vast amount of background information. In other words, there is a sense that the writer has chosen a claim because he or she is able to write well about it or feels invested in it. ● The writer appears to understand that he or she is presenting an argument for which there may be an opposing point of view or for which grey area exists.

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Level 8 Sample A

P. A. 1500
Class 5-429

Marco Paz
Sept 22, 2010

Swimming, the Best Activity

Swimming is the best extracurricular activity that anyone can do. First and foremost, it is recommended by many doctors that are very knowledgeable. Second of all, you use your whole body in the water. Third of all, people get to exercise. And last, but certainly not least, it is very good for people who get distressed and upset very easily since scientifically, water keeps the human body relaxed. So, in my opinion, swimming is really great.

First and foremost, it is recommended by many doctors that are very knowledgeable that swimming is the best sport there is. I once asked my own physician, and she articulated, "Swimming is the best sport because even if you are disabled, deaf, blind, no leg, etc. you could still swim. There are many ways to swim. Obviously, it would be easier for a non-disabled person." So, swimming is known as the sport for everyone.

Second of all, you use your whole body in the water. So, if you use your whole body, your bones, muscles become stronger and your mind becomes smarter. For example, for breaststroke, you have to do hand breaststroke and leg breaststroke at the same time. It is important to swim.

Third of all, people get to exercise which is great. If you exercise, you have little chance of getting fatal disease. If you swim, that is

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one step in being a healthy person. Swimming prevents almost all fatal diseases. So, I'd really recommend swimming.

And last, but not least, swimming is great for people who get distressed very easily and are always under pressure. Scientifically, water makes the mind relax. I swim and always forget about the real world and all difficulties. So, if you want a relaxed mind, swim.

Swimming is a great extracurricular activity. It is recommended by doctors. You use your whole body to swim. People get to exercise from swimming. Also, the water relaxes the mind. Swim because you will see a difference in your body.

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Level 9	An argument piece that supports a claim with reasons and relevant evidence, develops a point of view on an issue, and demonstrates an ability to think critically.
Structure/Genre	<p><i>Treatment of Subject/Topic</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When constructing an argument, the writer is purposeful about structure, introducing a claim, offering clear reasons and grouping relevant evidence in a way that logically develops his or her point of view. ○ The writer often writes in such a way as to situate his or her subject in the larger world, naming out the ways in which his or her opinion is important or how it relates to larger issues and themes. ○ The writer may include a counter-claim in order to establish his or her claim as part of a set of opposing points of view. He may do this in a way that feels awkward, perhaps by including one separate paragraph toward the end of the piece in which he describes the opposing point of view, but without an elaborate explanation of why this opposing viewpoint is weak. <p><i>Organization/Focus/Cohesiveness of Piece</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As in level eight, the writer orients the reader to the general topic. In addition, the writer may attempt to orient the reader in such a way that sets the reader up to agree with the writer’s claim, perhaps choosing statistics or anecdotes that evoke an emotional response. ○ The writer at this level may provide context for why he/she is choosing to focus on this particular topic. For example, in an introductory remark, the writer might state, “This essay will tell you about the reasons why the war in the Middle East should stop. It is very expensive, causes many civilian casualties, and encourages terrorism. This is important because war changes the ways people live for the worse.” ○ The writer provides clear, well-researched reasons to support his or her claim. For example, a writer whose claim is “The War in the Middle East should stop,” might explain that this war is one that is very expensive, causes many civilian casualties, and encourages terrorism.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer provides a concluding section that follows from the argument provided. The conclusion may reference the introduction, perhaps repeating or restating introductory material and perhaps also restating information from the subsections. That is, there is a sense that the writer has consciously crafted the beginning and ending so that they highlight what’s most important and compelling about this claim. ○ The writer chooses and presents subtopics that are more or less equal in weight and that each address a different aspect of the argument, thereby presenting a more comprehensive and thorough argument. ○ As in the previous level, there is a logic to the way the writer has organized the supporting sections. For example, the most compelling argument may have been saved for last, with the least compelling and most predictable placed towards the beginning of the piece. ○ The writer creates a sense of cohesiveness by carrying ideas forward through the essay. That is, point B will be an extension of point A, building upon the support and re-establishing its validity. For example, when arguing that “Dogs make great pets,” the writer may say this is true because they are loyal and because they are fun. When arguing for dogs being fun pets, the writer will not forget the earlier point (that they are loyal) and instead will carry it forward (“Even when they are running to fetch a ball, they are sure to look back over their shoulder to check on you.”)
<p>Elaboration/ Development</p>	<p><i>Amount and variety of details</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer continues to use a wide variety of detail from both personal and secondary sources, including examples, quotes, research findings, facts, logic and reasoning. <p><i>Authority of information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The use of domain-specific or advanced vocabulary and information (and/or the citation of secondary sources) allows the writer to develop the beginnings of an ‘expert voice’ on the topic. However, chances are that this ‘expert voice’ may not yet feel constant throughout the essay. ○ When prompted to access reference materials and

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	<p>resources provided on-site and when provided with preliminary preparation time in which to do this, the writer will insert one or more references from secondary sources. The writer will make an effort to elaborate on how the researched information supports the main argument. Research findings will feel somewhat incorporated into the flow of the essay, often because the writer attempts to unpack and explain these in the light of the rest of the arguments around them.</p> <p><i>Selectivity of Information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer doesn't merely select evidence that is clearly supportive of the main argument. To strengthen his or her argument, the writer deliberately selects and includes <i>opposing</i> evidence. However, as stated above, the writer does not always disprove or even address all of the evidence provided for the opposing viewpoint, so there may be a sense that the writer has not fully made his or her case. ○ Where the writer has been prompted to research and to incorporate research findings into his or her writing, the writer will be selective, using only research or quotations that clearly support his or her main argument, rather than plopping in any research finding that has a remote (or un-elaborated) relationship to this topic. <p><i>Elaboration</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer's writing volume and stamina will have increased from the previous level, leading to more thorough elaborative detail, which comprises a greater amount of nuance and detail for each point. ○ The writer will often select some surprise element or little-known fact regarding the topic and dramatically or forcefully elaborate upon this in order to convince the reader to side with his or her opinion.
Craft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The writer will have some mastery over citation techniques. He or she will either quote research sources directly within the text, through footnotes or by including an additional page of references. When quoting, the writer generally uses punctuation appropriately and cites the source. For example, the writer may use phrases such as, "According to the author...", or "As mentioned in the text..." ● Cited research or text might still create awkward pockets of text that alter the writer's natural flow or tone.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The writer uses words, phrases and clauses such as, “one reason,” “another reason,” and “lastly,” with increasing skill to clarify relationships between claims and reasons. ● When linking the idea in one section to that in another, the writer sometimes uses terms such as, “Like the..., the...” or “Earlier we saw that..., now we have a second reason....” ● The writer may play a bit on what he or she supposes are the readers’ assumptions about the topic being discussed, but then may make a quick turn back to what the writer really believes to be the case. “You may think...But what is true is...” ● The writer crafts the piece by switching back and forth between concrete examples and persuasion. ● The writer establishes authority through tone and maintains and manipulates this tone throughout the piece. There is a sense that the writer is beginning to grasp the “formal style” called for in some kinds of expository writing. ● The writer uses more sophisticated, nuanced language. This could encompass domain-specific language as well as other kinds of angled word choice, appearing to be chosen for affect. ● Writers have a growing command of pacing. When making authorial asides, for example, these asides tend to feel more smoothly integrated than at previous levels. One way the writer does this is with growing use of connective language such as “In my opinion”, “This is important because” and “As a side note.” Additionally, writers use their knowledge of good writing to make some parts of the text stand out or feel particularly important. ● The writer is beginning to use vivid imagery with a clear intent to support an opinion. ● The writer often angles scenes and anecdotes in order to show how they support the argument.
Meaning/Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The writer investigates a topic and gathers relevant information from several sources to build knowledge before forming an opinion. ● Writers at this level continue to choose topics about which they feel strongly and perhaps about which they have adequate background information. Many writers at this level are willing to take a risk and write about an opinion that might not be universally popular. ● As in previous levels, the writer demonstrates awareness that he or she is presenting a point of view for which there is an

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	<p>opposing point of view or shades of grey. This is evidenced throughout the piece, from the choice of a provocative topic, to the explicit mention of an opposing point of view, to the inclusion of examples that would support an opposing point of view.</p>
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Level 9
Sample A

vindy
Mrs. Makrogiannis

9/24/10
I.S.230

In this essay, I will discuss my opinions about global warming. Global warming is a very serious issue. Global warming is changing the earth in ways never before. The actions of humans led to the melting of once frozen glaciers, polluting seas, and change in climate. As the humans must change our ways in order to survive.

One reason global warming is serious is because glaciers are melting. The destruction of glaciers will lead to the loss of many civilizations. For example, if glaciers melt their water will rise up sea-levels and cause floods. As Al Gore has said in his movie "The Inconvenient Truth," "If the seas rise, many cities near bodies of water will be completely under water, including Manhattan." We need to change our impact on the earth!

Another reason humans need to change is because they pollute alot. Business men, greedy animals harm mother nature for their profit. For example, the toxic wastes are rising in numbers and with no room in the land fill, business men dump it into the sea, harming/poisoning the sea creatures in the seas. As it once happened in history, when farmers began using DDT's to kill pests, it resulted in a near loss of a species. The insects were poisoned and since they are the beginning of a food chain the eagles eat the fish that

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Mrs. Makrogiannis

9/24/10
I.S.280

eat the insects they were poisoned. The eagle race couldn't reproduce because when the females layed eggs, the shell was too soft and the hatchling died before it came out of its shell. This shows that another species might become extinct, and this time, the damage is too great.

The final reason global warming is serious is because it has the disastrous ability to change the climate. Climate is another form of mother nature; whoever controls it controls nature. For example the hurricanes are getting stronger and the heat is melting Antarctica. Al Gore also said that "for the first time since 1980, the heat level is very much over normal and it is higher than 1980." Stop global warming now!

In this essay, I have supported my claim and provided real life info. What I am trying to say is, this planet is ours! We ourselves are destroying it. Help mother earth!

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Level 10	An argument piece that supports a clear claim with reasons and relevant evidence, develops a point of view and often a counterclaim, and couches the argument in a larger theme or context.
Structure/ Genre	<p><i>Treatment of Subject/Topic</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When constructing an argument, the writer is purposeful about structure, introducing a claim, offering clear reasons and grouping relevant evidence in a way that logically and persuasively develops his or her point of view. ○ The writer situates his or her subject in the larger world, naming out the ways in which his or her opinion is important or how it relates to larger issues and themes (e.g. “People all over the world suffer from hunger, sickness, and thirst. The least we can do is pick up our soda cans.”) These thematic connections are not likely to be in one place only, but rather woven throughout the text to bolster the argument as a whole. ○ As with the prior level, the writer is apt to include a counterclaim in order to establish his or her claim as part of a set of opposing points of view. At this level, the writer does this with more finesse—elaborating on the ways in which the opposing viewpoint is weak or misguided. The placement of this counterargument may still feel a bit awkward, however, as the writer is apt to dedicate a portion of his or her essay to the counterpoint rather than weaving it into the body of the piece. <p><i>Organization/Focus/Cohesiveness of Piece</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The writer states the claim and then gives information that elaborates on the claim, angling this information in a way that makes the reader care and/or appreciate the importance of the topic. This often takes the form of a story, a statistic, or a compelling fact. (e.g. “Everyday people sit and stare at televisions, waiting for the flashing screen to deliver their news to them. Newspaper are not obsolete but are only used by 31% of the population to obtain information. The invention of modern technology is making us lazy.”) ○ In the introduction, the writer sets the stage for the organization of his or her argument, which follows a clear logic that was influenced by the claim (e.g. When writing about how modern technology has made us lazy, a student might write about how TV’s make us lazy, how cars make us lazy, and finally, how computers make us lazy. Alternately, he or she might write about how technology makes us lazy in the workplace, in our social lives, and at home).

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As with Level 9, the writer provides clear, well-researched reasons to support his or her claim. ○ The writer provides a concluding section that is linked to and further supports the claim. As with the prior level, there is a sense that the writer has consciously crafted the beginning and ending so that they highlight what’s most important and compelling about this claim. The writer at this level is apt to use the conclusion to place the argument in a larger world context or perhaps even introduce another, closely-related idea for the reader to consider (e.g. “With obesity and other problems troubling our country, can we really afford to sit back and relax?”) ○ If the writer has included a counterargument, he or she is strategic about its placement, typically including it toward the end of the piece. ○ As with Level 9, the writer will create cohesiveness in his or her argument by connecting point B back to point A, and point C back to both point B and point A.
<p>Elaboration/ Development</p>	<p><i>Amount and variety of details</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● When prompted to access reference materials and resources and when provided with preliminary time in which to do this, the writer will use a variety of details within each body paragraph. That is, in an attempt to make his or her argument universal, the writer will include evidence from more than one place (e.g. statistics about the number of hours people spend in front of the television coupled with a personal anecdote about watching too much TV or a quote from an expert on the topic). <p><i>Authority of information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The writer has developed a more authoritative voice, embedding domain-specific vocabulary and information with more ease and consistency than at previous levels. The writer will make an effort to elaborate on how the researched information supports the main argument. Research findings will feel more incorporated than at the previous level, as the writer becomes more adept at unpacking and connecting outside information to his or her argument. <p><i>Selectivity of Information</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The writer doesn’t merely select evidence that is clearly supportive of the main argument. To strengthen his or her argument, the writer deliberately selects and includes <i>opposing</i> evidence. He or she will choose this information carefully, attempting to select details that he or she is equipped to disprove or rebuff.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● When prompted to research and incorporate research findings, the writer will be selective with these details, as well, choosing facts, quotes and statistics that clearly support the argument he or she is attempting to make. This will often mean the writer seeks out several sources of information before deciding on the evidence he or she will include. <p><i>Elaboration</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The writer balances the need to elaborate with the need to be concise. The writer has a clear sense of mission in his or her writing (persuasion) and elaborates only on information that will accomplish this goal. He or she may list several supports for a given reason but choose only one (the one that he or she sees as most compelling) to elaborate on or explain more fully.
Craft	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The writer is purposeful about the ways in which he or she elaborates, seeking not only to persuade his or her reader, but also to leave the reader with a distinct impression or feeling. In an attempt to do this, the writer may exaggerate for effect or use powerful language (e.g. “Victims of bullying shouldn’t have to put up with feeling like they’re alone and unloved in the dark. No one deserves to feel like they’re a waste of life.”)
Meaning/ Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is a stronger sense than at previous levels that the writer understands that he or she is presenting a point of view for which there is likely to be an opposing opinion. This might be evidenced by a topic choice that implies an opposing side (parents’ rules) or explicitly mentioned in the text (“Bullying is a very provocative subject that is worth talking about. Most people know how badly the victim gets hurt, but sometimes bullying can be helpful to a victim’s life.”) Strong reasons and evidence, clearly angled to that opposition, will be used.

* Sample for Level 10 forthcoming *