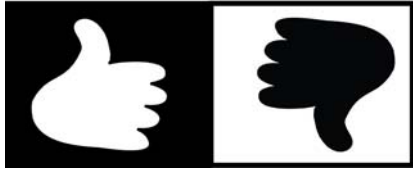




# Common Core Standards

Opinion/Argument



# Opinion/Argument Writing Exemplars

Pages 2-8

**Opinion/Argument Writing** sections of the **handbooks** for grades **K-2** and **3-6** on **annotating text** - with samples and **anchor papers** – [www.knoxeducation.com](http://www.knoxeducation.com)

Pages 9-13

**Opinion/Argument Writing with Color Coding** - with samples and resources page – [www.knoxeducation.com](http://www.knoxeducation.com)

Pages 14-22

**Anchor papers** from the California Department of Education - under California Common Core Standards – English Language Arts and Literacy [cde.ca.gov](http://cde.ca.gov) and our website [knoxeducation.com](http://www.knoxeducation.com)

Pages 23-29

Handout on Opinion Writing: **Teaching Students to Voice their Opinions Effectively with the Common Core Standards**, by Rachel Fielhauer, Fifth Grade Teacher, Legend Elementary, Newark City Schools - Reading Recovery Conference [rfielhauer@laca.org](mailto:rfielhauer@laca.org)  
[http://readingrecovery.org/images/pdfs/Conferences/NC13/Handouts/Fielhauer\\_Opinion\\_Writing\\_Handouts.pdf](http://readingrecovery.org/images/pdfs/Conferences/NC13/Handouts/Fielhauer_Opinion_Writing_Handouts.pdf)

Pages 23-29

**Anchor Papers** from the California Department of Education - under California Common Core Standards – English Language Arts and Literacy [cde.ca.gov](http://cde.ca.gov) and our website [knoxeducation.com](http://www.knoxeducation.com)

Pages 30-57

**Anchor papers** and **annotation** from New York City Department of Education 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Literacy TCRWP Nonfiction and Opinion/ Argument Writing Handbook  
[http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/C03E352F-F0EE-4152-8CBE-6F1D62864F5/0/NYCDOEG5Literacy\\_TCRWP\\_Final.pdf](http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/C03E352F-F0EE-4152-8CBE-6F1D62864F5/0/NYCDOEG5Literacy_TCRWP_Final.pdf)

Pages 58-64

A sampling of **Time for Kids Magazine's website** archive of current articles that can be used to introduce a topic for discussion and writing. <http://www.timeforkids.com/news>

Pages 64-66

An article from Costco Magazine, **"Should students be taught cursive writing?"**

# Writing Opinions

Week  
2

## Steps to writing for younger students:

With younger students use shared and interactive writing techniques for several topics as students begin to write these pieces on their own.

Leave the charts for these shared writes up throughout the unit on argument/opinion writing. Label the parts for the writing with post-its so that students can begin to "see" the structure.

Refer to your planning T charts as you compose the letters or little paragraphs.

### Our Opinion

*6<sup>th</sup> graders  
too loud  
during lunch  
recess*

### Our Reasons

*hear loud noises  
by our window  
can't hear  
storytime  
play far away  
from windows*

November 2, 2011

Dear Sixth Graders,

We are writing to ask if you could not play so loudly during your lunch recess.

When you are at lunch we are trying to enjoy our story time. We love to listen to stories! We learn so much from listening to our teacher read to us. We are wondering if you could play on the field away from our classroom windows at lunch. Please write back!

Yours truly,  
The first graders in room 6

closing  
signature

date

An example of a review of a book written as a shared writing:

Our class loves the book, Chato's Kitchen, by Gary Soto. We were scared that Chato, the cat, and his friend Novio Boy, would eat the mice when they came to the party. Chorizo, the dog, saved the day. The paintings in the book are beautiful and the writing is full of Spanish words we know. We recommend you read Chato's Kitchen.

our opinion

title/author

why we like it

## Writing Reviews as Opinion Writing

Students can be taught at the youngest ages to share their opinions about the books they are reading or being read to. This helps them make deeper meaning while they read and grow into discriminating readers who understand their preferences. It also builds the whole community of readers as students realize their classmates have opinions about the books in the room. A recently reviewed title will most undoubtedly become a classroom favorite.

Students can also have fun writing reviews about anything in their environment such as

- Books
- Favorite foods
- Restaurants
- Movies
- Video games
- Parks
- Sports Teams
- Musical Groups

Begin this unit with lots of opportunities to share opinions orally through class or group discussions. You can weave the following into any read aloud or anthology story assignment:

- Did you like/dislike this story? Why or why not?
- What did you think about how the author developed the character?
- What do you think about the way the story unfolded?
- Do you like \_\_\_\_ (kind of genre)? Why?

You may want to provide some language frames or linking words to support their statements:

I think \_\_\_\_\_ because\_\_\_\_\_

For example when \_\_\_\_\_

Another reason is \_\_\_\_\_

Since \_\_\_\_\_ then \_\_\_\_\_

Also\_\_\_\_\_

I liked \_\_\_\_\_, but the best part was \_\_\_\_\_

Next read reviews to students so that they can see how they are constructed. There are many wonderful websites with reviews written for students either by students or by adults for students.

### Check out:

<http://www.spaghettibookclub.org/>

This website has hundreds of reviews written by students in schools all over the country which are searchable by title, reviewer, or school. An example from a kindergartener below shows the writing as well as her picture follows.



The pigs build houses and the wolf tries to eat them and the pigs went to the brick house and the wolf couldn't get them.

I liked it because the end is really funny. The end was my favorite because the pigs have the most fun and they play music.

I recommend it to friends that like playing music, reading and dancing.

(This review was dictated.)

Other resources for writing reviews

**Common Sense Media**

<http://www.commonsensemedia.org/>

This website has reviews and a rating system for books, video games, movies, TV shows and more. Most are written by adults, but some short pieces are written by students.

**Cyber Kids**

<http://www.cyberkids.com>

This website houses reviews for movies, books, software, toys and video games, some written by students.

**Kids First**

<http://www.kidsfirst.org>

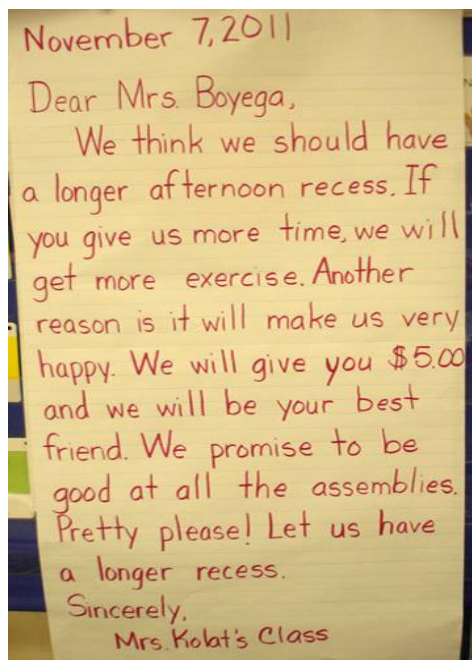
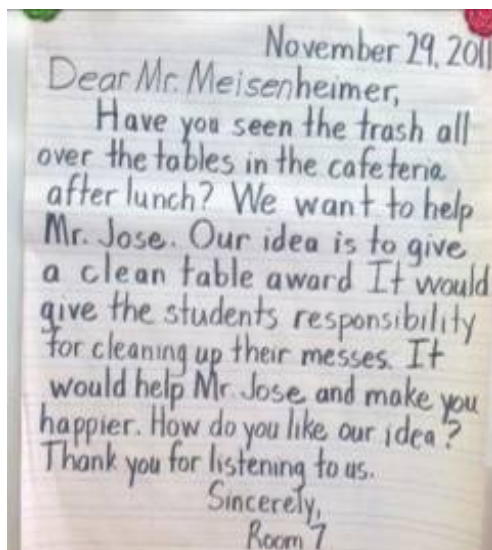
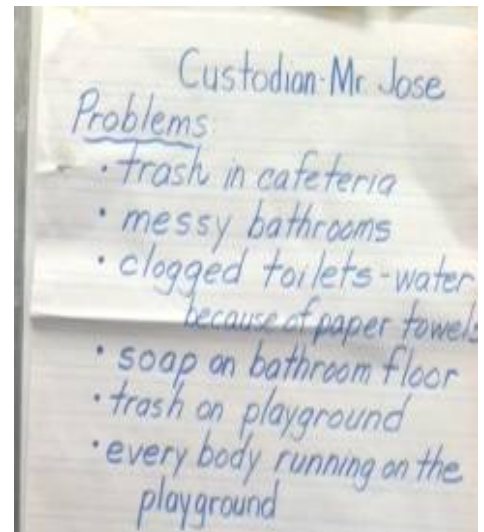
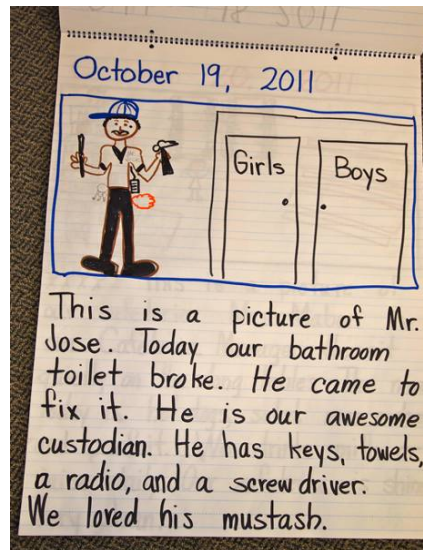
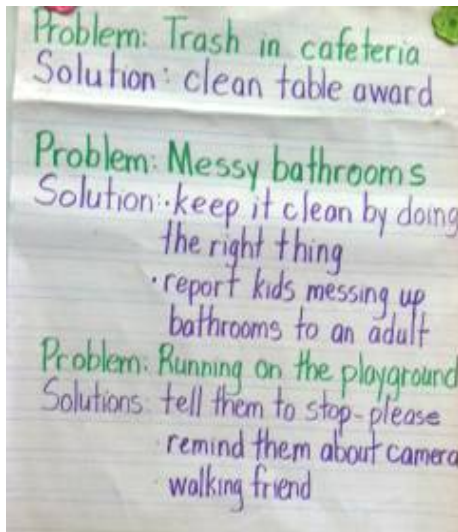
This website houses movie reviews written by students that are viewable via UTube. Really adorable footage. If you able to show them at school they would be very engaging for students.

# Opinion Writing Lesson Sequence for Younger Students—K-2

## Interviews:

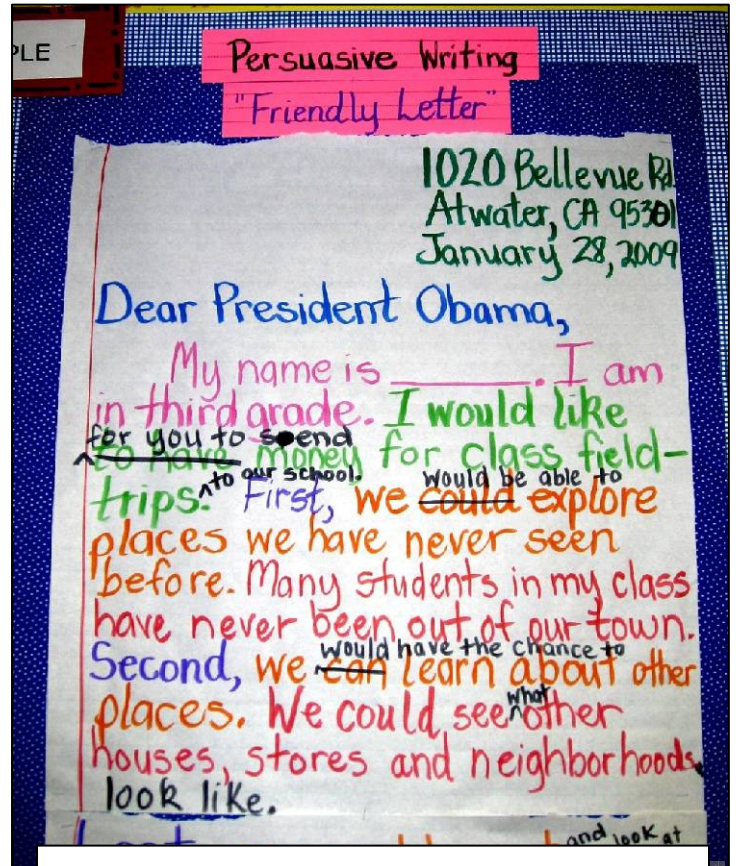
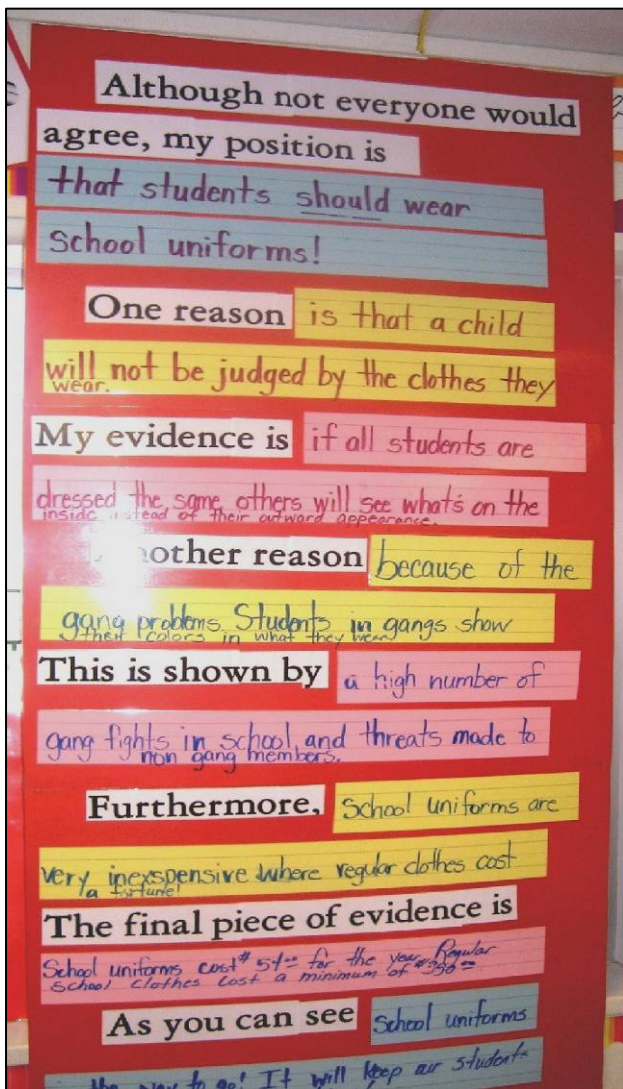
You could also invite members of the staff or older students to your classroom and interview them about their ideas about what could be improved to make the school a better place. For example, the students could ask:

- Do you see any problems at our school?
- How do you think they could be solved?
- How could we help?



# Examples of Opinion/Argument Writing

This teacher has created a laminated frame to use for shared writing of opinion pieces emphasizing transition words.



The Language Experience Approach can be used to create a model for a persuasive letter writing experience. This third grade teacher has worked with students to construct a formal letter to the President about their desire to go on a field trip.

# Teacher Modeling and Color Coding

Week  
1

Here is an example of a teacher's modeling of an argument essay which includes all of the required elements. This teacher wrote this in front of her students, talked out loud about each element, and then labeled those parts with color coding and labels when she was done. The elements include:

- Hook for opening
- Transition words
- Arguments and evidence
- Counter argument and response
- Conclusion

This chart is then left up for students to refer to throughout the argument writing unit.

Jo Ellen Anderson, Literacy Coach, Burbank Elementary School, Hayward, CA

The image shows a handwritten argument essay titled "Eyes on the Road!" with several sections labeled and color-coded. The labels include "Title", "Hook", "Background info", "Thesis Statement", "Argument #1", "Evidence", "Argument #2", "Evidence", "Counter-argument", and "Conclusion". The text is written in blue ink on lined paper. The essay discusses the dangers of distracted driving and the importance of focusing on the road. The text is color-coded: blue for the title and hook, yellow for background information, green for the thesis statement, red for the first argument and evidence, blue for the second argument and evidence, and green for the counter-argument and conclusion. The essay is pinned to a wall with blue and yellow sticky notes.

**Title** Eyes on the Road! **1. Model**

**Hook** What will be next, Seeing someone in the car next to me shaving their legs? Certainly, some drivers have always done other things while driving, like changing the radio station or picking their nose. Recently, there has been much discussion about the dangers of cell phone use while driving. But that is not the only thing drivers are doing behind the wheels; many are also applying make-up, reading the newspaper, eating a sandwich, texting or brushing their teeth. Drivers need to stop multi-tasking and focus on the road!

**Background info**

**Thesis Statement** First of all, it is a known fact that distracted drivers often cause accidents. While looking in the mirror to curl her eyelashes, a driver could run a red light and crash into someone. A driver checking his email on his smartphone might not notice when another car changes lanes and could veer right into him. When drivers are distracted, it puts everyone in danger.

**Argument #1**

**Evidence** At the very least, distracted drivers slow down traffic. A driver reading the newspaper at a stoplight might not move forward when the light turns green, infuriating those behind her. Drivers talking on the phone often don't realize how slow they are going.

**Argument #2**

**Evidence** On the other hand, some drivers argue that they can do other things and still pay attention to the road. They say that making phone calls and flossing their teeth in the car saves them time. It is clear that these people are kidding themselves. Saving a few minutes is not worth putting themselves and others in danger!

**Counter-argument**

**Conclusion** As you can see, many accidents and traffic jams could be avoided if drivers would just focus on one thing: driving! Yes, it may take you a few extra minutes, but please wait until you arrive safely at home to clip those fingernails and text Grandma. It will be worth it!

The image shows a collection of handwritten notes on a black background. The notes are written in white ink and are arranged in a vertical list. The text of the notes is as follows:

- Some drivers drive dangerously fast on the freeway.
- It really is not possible to concentrate on driving when you are doing something else.
- Many of the worst car accidents occur because drivers aren't focusing on what they are doing.
- There wouldn't be as much traffic if drivers would just pay attention to the road.

# Shared Writing of Opinion/Argument Essay

Charts for Topics to Choose from for Writing unit

FOR and AGAINST

<p><b>Elements of a Letter</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date</li> <li>• Greeting</li> <li>Dear _____,</li> <li>To Whom it May Concern:</li> <li>• Indent body</li> <li>• Closing</li> <li>Sincerely Regards Your Friend,</li> <li>• Signature</li> </ul>	<p><b>Idea List</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• homework</li> <li>• environmental awareness</li> <li>• favorite sport</li> <li>• Burbank Lunch Menu</li> <li>• Musical Artist</li> <li>• School Sports Teams</li> <li>• Videos Games at school</li> <li>• Pets at school</li> <li>• Own equipment at school</li> <li>• Dessert at school</li> </ul>
--	--

Topic: Recess in Elementary School

For	Against
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exercise keeps kids healthy</li> <li>• It's fun</li> <li>• Taking a break and moving helps students focus in class</li> <li>• Teachers get a break</li> <li>• Learn more sports + games</li> <li>• a chance to use the restroom w/out interrupting class</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We need more learning time</li> <li>• Kids get hurt or have conflicts at recess</li> <li>• It could be too hot or cold outside</li> <li>• Students get bullied</li> </ul>

Chart with start of essay about recess

**Healthy Kids, More Recess!**

Do you want students to do poorly in school just because they never get a break? Some people think that schools should do away with recess. However, I think that we should have longer recesses. First of all, exercise keeps kids healthy.





## Opinion/Argument Writing with Color Coding:

Provide students with a sample editorial piece of writing such as the one below. Establish a color coding system such as:

- Green** = Opinion Statement
- Yellow** = Reasons in support claim
- Pink** = Counter argument
- Blue** = to indicate facts and research to support claim
- Underline = linking words
- © = Closure/conclusion

Guide students to highlight the article using the coding system. They may also want to number the reasons and put a star by the strongest reason provided. They can keep these examples as “anchor texts” to help them understand the structure of this genre of writing.

### Sample One:

## Are School Uniforms Really That Bad?

Last week the Parent Teacher Association met to discuss whether or not the students at our school should begin wearing school uniforms. Most students who heard about the discussion were completely against the idea. Juanita Sanchez, a seventh grader, said, “Uniforms are so gross. Why would anyone want to look the same as everyone else?” This seemed to be the general feeling among most students.

But this writer thinks that the school uniform issue should be seriously considered. **In my opinion, school uniforms are NOT that bad, and have some benefits that students should consider before making up their minds against them.**

Miss Sanchez stated that she felt that uniforms made everyone look the same. Is that really so bad? Obviously, we don’t all want to look alike in every way. But maybe if we all had to wear the same thing, we wouldn’t focus so much on having the coolest jeans, or the hottest sneakers. According to an article in the New York Times, students our age spend about \$50 a week on clothes and accessories. That is a lot of money! What if you don’t have that kind of money to spend on clothes? Unfortunately, at our school, if you are not wearing cool clothes, people make fun of you. Nobody likes to be made fun of, so students take matters into their own hands. Last year at Jefferson school, over 60 students were robbed. Money, clothes, and jewelry were all taken from lockers and book bags.

If everyone had to wear uniforms, students would not feel such pressure to keep up with the latest styles. Also, students could express their individuality in different ways, like hairdos and by must being more outgoing.

© **I urge parents, teachers and students at Jefferson School to really think about school uniforms—they are not as bad as you think!**

## Sample Two:

# Hang Up and Drive

(6<sup>th</sup> grade student model from Write Source: <http://thewritesource.com/>)

You see it every day, especially in freeway traffic. A car is weaving back and forth, speeding up then slowing down, or suddenly stopping. No, it's not a drunk driver. It's a cell-phone driver. Cell phones are used everywhere, but on the road they are a dangerous distraction to drivers and should be prohibited.

*The New England Journal of Medicine* reported that "motorists using a cell phone were four times more likely to have an accident than those not using a phone." The major problem is that the driver is not focused on the road, but on his or her conversation. Cell-phone drivers are very unpredictable: they weave, tailgate, drive too fast or too slow, make improper turns, run red lights, and even stop at green ones. It's not only annoying; it's hazardous. Cell-phone-related accidents include rear-ending vehicles; running off a road and crashing into trees, fences, and buildings; flipping over; and having head-on collisions. Many of these accidents result in fatalities. In October at the California Traffic Safety Summit, experts testified that "cell phones used by drivers lead to at least 1,000 deaths per year in California." These are the same problems that occur with drunk driving, which is strictly outlawed and harshly enforced. For the same reasons, California needs laws that restrict the use of cell phones in cars.

Until we take action to pass new laws, drivers at least need to be more responsible when using cell phones. The American Automobile Association recommends that drivers pull off the road before using a cell phone, have a passenger use it for them, or use voice mail to answer calls. Another suggestion is to keep the phone off while moving or simply not use it in the car. Before using a cell phone, drivers should think to themselves, "Is this call really *that* important?"

© Cell phones can be a vital link in emergencies, but drivers need to use them wisely. As professional NASCAR racer John Andretti says, "Driving safely is your first responsibility." The best road to safety is to just hang up and drive.

## Annotating Text:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Are School Uniforms Really That Bad?

Last week the Parent Teacher Association met to discuss whether or not the students at our school should begin wearing school uniforms. Most students who heard about the discussion were completely against the idea. Juanita Sanchez, a seventh grader, said, "Uniforms are so gross. Why would anyone want to look the same as everyone else?" This seemed to be the general feeling among most students.

But this writer thinks that the school uniform issue should be seriously considered. In my opinion, school uniforms are NOT that bad, and have some benefits that students should consider before making up their minds against them.

Miss Sanchez stated that she felt that uniforms made everyone look the same. Is that really so bad? Obviously, we don't all want to look alike in every way. But maybe if we all had to wear the same thing, we wouldn't focus so much on having the coolest jeans, or the hottest sneakers. According to an article in the New York Times, students our age spend about \$50 a week on clothes and accessories. That is a lot of money! What if you don't have that kind of money to spend on clothes? Unfortunately, at our school, if you are not wearing cool clothes, people make fun of you. Nobody likes to be made fun of, so students take matters into their own hands. Last year at Jefferson cool, over 60 students were robbed. Money, clothes, and jewelry were all taken from lockers and book bags.

If everyone had to wear uniforms, students would not feel such pressure to keep up with the latest styles. Also, students could express their individuality in different ways, like hairdos and by must being more outgoing.

I urge parents, teachers and students at Jefferson School to really think about school uniforms—they are not as bad as you think!

---

### Color coding system to annotate text:

- Green** = Opinion Statement
- Yellow** = Reasons in support claim
- Pink** = Counter argument
- Blue** = to indicate facts and research to support claim
- Underline = linking words
- © = Closure/conclusion

## Annotating Text:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Hang Up and Drive

(6<sup>th</sup> grade student model from Write Source: <http://thewritesource.com/>)

You see it every day, especially in freeway traffic. A car is weaving back and forth, speeding up then slowing down, or suddenly stopping. No, it's not a drunk driver. It's a cell-phone driver. Cell phones are used everywhere, but on the road they are a dangerous distraction to drivers and should be prohibited.

*The New England Journal of Medicine* reported that "motorists using a cell phone were four times more likely to have an accident than those not using a phone." The major problem is that the driver is not focused on the road, but on his or her conversation. Cell-phone drivers are very unpredictable: they weave, tailgate, drive too fast or too slow, make improper turns, run red lights, and even stop at green ones. It's not only annoying; it's hazardous. Cell-phone-related accidents include rear-ending vehicles; running off a road and crashing into trees, fences, and buildings; flipping over; and having head-on collisions. Many of these accidents result in fatalities. In October at the California Traffic Safety Summit, experts testified that "cell phones used by drivers lead to at least 1,000 deaths per year in California." These are the same problems that occur with drunk driving, which is strictly outlawed and harshly enforced. For the same reasons, California needs laws that restrict the use of cell phones in cars.

Until we take action to pass new laws, drivers at least need to be more responsible when using cell phones. The American Automobile Association recommends that drivers pull off the road before using a cell phone, have a passenger use it for them, or use voice mail to answer calls. Another suggestion is to keep the phone off while moving or simply not use it in the car. Before using a cell phone, drivers should think to themselves, "Is this call really *that* important?"

Cell phones can be a vital link in emergencies, but drivers need to use them wisely. As professional NASCAR racer John Andretti says, "Driving safely is your first responsibility." The best road to safety is to just hang up and drive.

---

### Color coding system to annotate text:

- Green** = Opinion Statement
- Yellow** = Reasons in support claim
- Pink** = Counter argument
- Blue** = to indicate facts and research to support claim
- Underline = linking words
- © = Closure/conclusion



## Resources for Opinion/Argument Writing for Students

### Children's books as models for Argument/Opinion Writing

**Should We Have Pets? A Persuasive Text** by Pamela W. Jane, Sylvia Lollis and Joyce Hogan (Jan 2002). New York, NY: Mondo Publishing.

**Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type**, by Doreen Cronin (2011). New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

**I Wanna Iguana**, by Karen Kaufman Orloff (2004). New York, NY: Putnam.

**I Wanna New Room**, by Karen Kaufman Orloff (2010). New York, NY: Putnam.

**Earrings!** by Judith Viorst (2010). New York, NY: Atheneum.

**Hey, Little Ant**, by Phillip and Hannah Noose( 1998). New York, NY: Tricycle/Random.

**Can I Keep Him?** By Steven Kellogg (1992). New York, NY: Penguin.

**Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!** By Mo Willems (2012). New York, NY: Hyperion.

*Costco Magazine* has a monthly editorial that often involves a topic of interest to students. There are two essays included, one on each side of an issue.

### Websites:

**Time for Kids Magazine's website** includes an archive with many provocative and current articles that can be used to introduce a topic for discussion and writing.

<http://www.timeforkids.com/news>

**The Writing Fix website** is a gold mine of resources for teaching writing based on the six traits model. Their Opinion/Argument section contains several great lesson ideas. Check out the RAFTS lesson on electing a vegetable which includes research on the nutritional qualities of the fruit or vegetable the student select to write about

<http://writingfix.com/genres/persuasive.htm>

**Opinion/Argument Essay Prompts:** This link takes you to a list of 53 Opinion/Argument essay prompts which are similar to those found on the NAEP test, lots of good ones here:

<http://www2.asd.wednet.edu/pioneer/barnard/wri/per.htm>

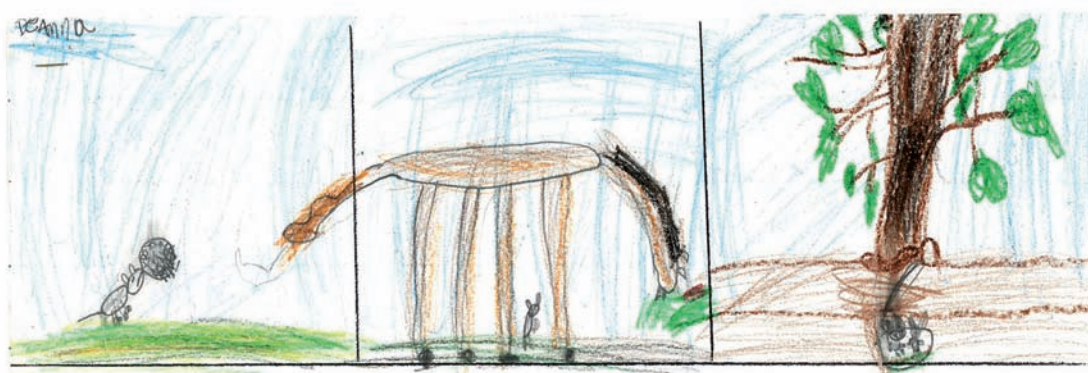
**163 Questions to Write or Talk About** from The Learning Network: Teaching and Learning

<http://NYTimes.com/genres/persuasive.htm>. **Some samples:**

1. [Do Apps Help You or Just Waste Your Time?](#)
2. [Do You Keep a Diary or Journal?](#)
3. [Should Schools Offer Cash Bonuses for Good Test Scores?](#)
4. [Would You Like to Take a Class Online?](#)
5. [Are Children of Illegal Immigrants Entitled to a Public Education?](#)
6. [What Is Your Personal Credo?](#)
7. [How Do You Personalize the Things You're Required to Have at School?](#)
8. [Should Students Be Required to Take Drug Tests?](#)
9. [Do You Participate in Class?](#)

## Student Sample: K, Argument (Opinion)

This opinion piece about a work of literature was produced in class.



MY <sup>Book,</sup> ~~fabit~~ <sup>is</sup> do you Want to be my FRIEND.  
 the mas as the hos if you Will  
 be my FRIEND. the hos said No. the  
 mas ~~is~~ a FRIEND the mas as the  
~~lat~~ mas if you Will be my FRIEND  
 the ~~lat~~ mas said Yes the  
 dig a hal in the gal. my  
 fait <sup>pot</sup> is the hos

### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- tells the reader the name of the book (in the title of the paper).
  - My *fabit* (favorite) *Book* is do you Want to be my FRIEND
- states an opinion or preference about the book.
  - . . . my *fait* (favorite) *pot* (part) is the hos (horse)

**Student Sample: Grade 2, Argument (Opinion)**

This opinion piece about a work of literature was produced in class.

Owl Moon  
When you go owling  
you don't need words, or worm  
or any thing, but hope. This  
is the book of Owl Moon.  
This book is written by  
Jane Yolen. I like that  
phrase Because The boy  
was happy becaus he got  
to go owling and hes been  
wonted to go owling for a  
long time and he finally  
got to go.

When other Kids are  
happy that makes me  
happy. I like it Because  
it makes me feel good  
Because you dont haf't  
to have words to go owling  
but you haf't to have  
hope to see an owl.

---

## Annotation

The writer of this piece

- **introduces the topic (with some words from the book) and the title.**
  - *When you go owling you don't need words, or worm (warm) or any thing. but hope. This is (from) the book of Owl Moon.*
- **states an opinion about the book and supplies reasons to support the opinion.**
  - *I like that phrase **Because** The boy was happy becaus (because) he got to go owling and hes (he's) been wonted (wanting) to go owling for a long time and he finally got to go. When other kids are happy that makes me happy.*
- **uses linking words to connect opinion and reasons.**
  - *I like it **Because** it makes me feel good **Because** you don't haft (have) to have words to go owling **but** you haft to have hope to see an owl.*
- **provides a concluding statement.**
  - *I like it **Because** it makes me feel good **Because** you don't haft (have) to have words to go owling but you haft to have hope to see an owl.*
- **demonstrates growing command of the conventions of standard written English.**
  - This piece illustrates the writer's understanding that capital letters are used in a title, that the pronoun *I* should be capitalized, and that sentences should begin with a capital letter. The title of the book is underlined, and most words are spelled correctly. The use of the comma and the apostrophe is not consistent, but all sentences end with periods.



## Student Sample: Grade 4, Argument (Opinion)

This argument was produced in class, and the writer likely received feedback from her teacher and peers.

### Zoo Field Trip

Dear Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_,

We have a problem. The wildlife here in \_\_\_\_\_ is very limited. There is not a lot of opportunity to learn about conservation and wildlife preservation. If we took a field trip to \_\_\_\_\_ our problem would be solved. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and I would like to take our class for a great learning experience. In addition, we will provide a study guide to \_\_\_\_\_ to identify the animals and provide information about conservation of endangered wildlife.

If we went on a field trip, we will learn about the wildlife from around the world and how \_\_\_\_\_ provides a natural habitat for them to live and breed. This information would help us to understand the importance of science in our day to day life. We would use math to make a budget and figure out a way to earn money. These skills will be very useful again and again. We will learn how to make a schedule with target dates. This will provide us with a plan that covers the entire project from start to finish. The preparation of the study guide will require lots of research and organization of information.

The first thing to do is research, research, research! Next, we will choose a fund raiser (with your approval, of course). This will earn money for the field trip. The parents will hopefully chip in their time and money, if we don't get enough. We will prepare a plan schedule. This will provide the dates that team members will need to accomplish the steps toward our goal. My competent adult model is the Unofficial Guide to Walt Disney World. It shows us step by step how to plan a trip and what to see.

Now, you are asking why should I approve a trip to \_\_\_\_\_? How does this help \_\_\_\_\_ and the students? Besides the fact that the project planning, fund raising, budgeting and reporting will provide an excellent learning opportunity, it will provide education. It will also provide awareness of wildlife and the importance of conservation. This project will be evaluated by its successful planning and its ability to involve our class in wildlife conservation. The trip will be evaluated by the student participation on the trip and a plan of conservation that identifies what we can all do to protect and respect wildlife so they will still be around when we have children.

Sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- **introduces a topic clearly, states an opinion, and creates an organizational structure in which related ideas are grouped to support the writer's purpose.**
  - *We have a problem. The wildlife here in \_\_\_\_\_ is very limited. There is not a lot of opportunity to learn about conservation and wildlife preservation. If we took a field trip to \_\_\_\_\_ our problem would be solved. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and I would like to take our class for a great learning experience.*
- **provides reasons that are supported by facts and details.**
  - *If we went on a field trip, we will learn about the wildlife from around the world and how \_\_\_\_\_ provides a natural habitat for them to live and breed. This information would help us to understand the importance of science in our day to day life. We would use math to make a budget and figure out a way to earn money . . . We will learn how to make a schedule with target dates . . . The preparation of the study guide will require lots of research and organization of information.*

- **links opinion and reasons using words and phrases.**
  - *The first thing to do . . . Next . . . Now, you are asking . . . Besides the fact . . .*
- **provides a concluding section related to the opinion presented.**
  - The final paragraph details possible objections to the field trip and argues against each one:  
*Now, you are asking why should I approve a trip to \_\_\_\_\_?. . . Besides the fact that the project planning, fund raising, budgeting and reporting will provide an excellent learning opportunity, it will provide education. It will also provide awareness of wildlife and the importance of conservation.*
- **demonstrates exemplary command of the conventions of standard written English.**
  - This piece has been edited by student response groups as well as by adults, so it is nearly flawless in terms of observing the conventions of standard written English.

## Student Sample: Grade 6, Argument

This argument (incorrectly labeled a story) is a process piece produced in class.

### A Pet Story About My Cat . . . Gus

People get pets so that they will never be lonely, and they will always have a friend to be there for them. Ask your heart, what makes the best pet??? Some people think a best pet is picky, energetic, and sneaky, but I think my pet is the best pet because he is a cuddle bug, he's playful, and he loves me! Gus was about eight weeks old when we got him, now he is 4 1/2 months old, and he is about as big as a size eight sneaker. He is a little gray and white kitten. If you look closely he has a gray tail, but there are darker gray rings around it. He has a little white on his face, and some on his tummy and paws. He has a little stripe on his leg but it is his back left leg only. He's very cute, and he purrs a lot! He also has a cute little gray nose.

One of the reasons why my cat Gus is the best pet is because he is a cuddle bug. When Gus was a baby, he had to be kept in a cage because he wasn't allowed to interact with the other pets until he was older. He couldn't interact with the other pets because when Twister was a baby, the ferrets bit her ear and dragged her under the bed, and bit her in the back of the neck and we didn't want the same thing to happen to Gus. Also because Twister had to be kept in a cage when she was little, too. His cage was in my room so when he meowed, as if to say, "Get me out!" I would have to take him out and sleep with him. All he would do is thank me for doing that by snuggling against my chin! Another example to prove that Gus is a cuddle bug, is that when I'm feeding Gus, I put his and Twister's bowl up on the counter when I do so, and Twister sits there patiently while Gus is snuggling against my legs to show affection toward me. He snuggles my leg even when I'm walking around! Well, at least he tries to, because he follows me, and when I stop walking, he starts to cuddle. Eventually I pick him up and cuddle him back!!! Finally, when I have nothing to do and I'm just sitting on my bed reading, Gus jumps up with me and then he pushes away the covers to get under them, and he sleeps on my chest to keep my company when I'm board. After he slept on my tummy many times, he finally got the nickname \_\_\_\_\_ Cuddle Buddy. Now I always snuggle with my favorite cuddle buddy . . . Gus!!!

A second reason why Gus is the best pet is because he's playful. Most of the time when Gus is lying on the couch minding his own business, I'll reach out to pet him then he'll start biting my hand and attacking it!!! He does this to be playful, not to hurt anyone but he just wants to have fun. It kind of tickles when he does it, actually. Gus also has a little toy mouse that is attached to a string that I drag around the house so that Gus will follow it. The mouse has a leopard skin pattern on it with balls of fur as hands and feet. The mouse is about the size of the pencil sharpeners in Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ classroom. He goes after that mouse so fast that it's hard to see him running by to catch it. When Gus was a baby, I would put him in my bed to sleep with, but before we went to sleep, I would move my feet around underneath the covers, while Gus was on top chasing them around. Eventually, he got tired and lied down near my feet, but before he was completely asleep, I would pick him up and put him near my pillow and we slept together. Gus loves doing that all the time. I love how Gus is so playful!!!

The last reason why Gus is the best pet is because he loves me! He always misses me whenever I'm not there. When I come home from school and I open the door, Gus comes flying around the corner, and starts to climb my pants! When he gets high enough, I grab him in my arms and we start cuddling each other while Gus is happily purring. He does this a lot. Most of the time I'm in my room watching TV, while Gus and Twister are fighting and killing each other, they come dashing around the corner and into my room. I, of course, have to break up the fight. After that, I put them on my bed and hold them down, but they keep squirming. Soon, they get tired and sleep with me, silently, watching TV. Gus is with me as much as possible. Sometimes he's busy playing with Twister, sleeping, or eating. Otherwise, he's playing or sleeping with me. We do so many things together and I'm glad I got him, but technically, he chose me. It was a homeless cat shelter. They were able to catch the kittens, but not there mommy. His brothers and sisters were all playing, but he was sleeping under the table. Soon, he walked out from under the table and slept with me while we cuddled on the couch. That's how I met Gus.

People have feelings for their pets that show that they love them very much. When I had to decide what makes the best pet, I would say that Gus is the best pet because he is a cuddle bug, he's playful, and he loves me. When you think about the examples that I gave you, like when I told you about how Gus snuggles against my chin, you saw that Gus **IS** the best pet and if you don't believe me, you have a problem with deciding who the best pet is.

## Annotation

The writer of this piece

- **introduces a claim and organizes the reasons and evidence clearly.**
  - . . . *I think my pet is the best pet because he is a cuddle bug, he's playful, and he loves me!*
- **supports the claim with clear reasons and relevant evidence, demonstrating an understanding of the topic.**
  - *One of the reasons why my cat Gus is the best pet is because he is a cuddle bug.* The writer elaborates this point by providing three examples of his cat's affectionate nature: freed from his cage, the cat snuggles against the narrator's chin; the cat rubs against the narrator's legs; and the cat sleeps on the narrator.
  - *A second reason why Gus is the best pet is because he's playful.* The writer elaborates this point with three examples of the cat's playful nature: Gus attacks the narrator's hand; Gus plays with a toy mouse; and Gus attacks the narrator's feet when they are under the covers.
  - *The last reason why Gus is the best pet is because he loves me!* The writer elaborates this point with three examples: Gus runs to greet the narrator when he returns home from school; Gus and the other cat, Twister, scuffle with one another until the narrator separates them, and then they sleep with the narrator as he watches television; and Gus spends as much time as possible in the narrator's company.
- **uses words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among the claim and reasons.**
  - *One of my reasons . . . A second reason . . . The last reason . . .*
- **establishes and maintains a formal style (except for the last sentence).**
  - The style throughout the document is appropriate for convincing readers about the writer's claim although the last sentence in the three-page-long paper (*. . . if you don't believe me, you have a problem with deciding who the best pet is*) seems inappropriate because it lapses into *ad hominem*.
- **provides a concluding statement that follows from the argument presented.**
  - *When I had to decide what makes the best pet, I would say that Gus is the best pet . . . When you think about the examples that I gave you, like when I told you about how Gus snuggles against my chin, you saw that Gus **IS** the best pet . . .*
- **demonstrates good command of the conventions of standard written English (with occasional errors that do not interfere materially with the underlying message).**

## Student Sample: Grade 7, Argument

This argument was produced for an on-demand assessment. Students were asked to write a letter to their principal about a plan to install video cameras in the classroom for safety reasons. The abbreviated time frame of the assessment (and the consequent lack of opportunity to perform research and revise) explains the absence of information from sources and possibly also the occasional errors.

### Video Cameras in Classrooms

You are seated in class as your teacher explains and points things out on the whiteboard. You twitch your hand, accidentally nudging your pencil, which rolls off your desk and clatters to the floor. As you lean over to pick up your pencil, your cell phone falls out of your coat pocket! Luckily you catch it without your teacher seeing, but it is in plain view of the video camera's shiny lens that points straight at you. The classroom phone rings, and after a brief conversation, your teacher walks over to your desk and kneels down beside you. "About that cell phone of yours . . ." How did that get you in trouble? How could it possibly be a good idea to put cameras in classrooms?

When students are in their classrooms, teachers are in the classroom too, usually. But when a teacher goes out of the classroom, what usually happens is either everything goes on as usual, or the students get a little more talkative. Cameras aren't there because people talk a lot. It is the teacher's job to keep people quiet. If something horrible happened, somebody in class would usually report it, or it would just be obvious to the teacher when he came back that something had happened.

If we already have cameras in the halls, why spend the money to get thirty more cameras for all the different classrooms? Our school district already has a low budget, so we would be spending money on something completely unnecessary. There hasn't been camera-worthy trouble in classrooms. Camera-worthy trouble would be bad behavior every time a teacher left the room. There is no reason to install cameras that might just cause trouble, both for the students and for the budget.

Different students react differently when there is a camera in the room. Some students get nervous and flustered, trying hard to stay focused on their work with a camera focused on them. 90% of students claim that they do better work when they are calmer, and cameras are not going to help. Other students look at cameras as a source of entertainment. These students will do things such as wave at the camera, make faces, or say hi to the people watching through the camera. This could be a big distraction for others who are trying to learn and participate in class. Still other students will try to trick the camera. They will find a way to block the lens or do something that the camera will not be likely to catch. All of these different students will be distracted by the cameras in their classrooms.

Instead of solving problems, cameras would cause the problems. That is why I disagree with the idea to put cameras in classrooms. This plan should not be put to action.

---

### Annotation

The writer of this piece

- **introduces a claim (stated late in the essay).**
  - *. . . I disagree with the idea to put cameras in classrooms. This plan should not be put to action.*
- **acknowledges alternate or opposing claims.**
  - *Instead of solving problems, cameras would cause the problems.*
- **supports the claim with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, demonstrating an understanding of the topic.**
  - *[Cameras are not necessary because] [i]f something horrible happened, somebody in class would usually report it, or it would just be obvious to the teacher when he came back that something had happened.*
  - *. . . we already have cameras in the halls . . .*

- *Our school district already has a low budget . . .*
- **uses words, phrases, and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among the claim, reasons, and evidence.**
  - *If . . . already . . . why . . . so . . . Some students . . . Other students . . . These students . . . All of these different students . . .*
- **establishes and maintains a formal style.**
  - *When students are in their classrooms, teachers are in the classroom too, usually. But when a teacher goes out of the classroom, what usually happens is either everything goes on as usual, or the students get a little more talkative.*
  - *Different students react differently when there is a camera in the room.*
- **provides a concluding statement that follows from and supports the argument presented.**
  - *Instead of solving problems, cameras would cause the problems. That is why I disagree with the idea to put cameras in classrooms. This plan should not be put to action.*
- **demonstrates good command of the conventions of standard written English (with occasional errors that do not interfere materially with the underlying message).**



Rylie + Janey + Madison

10-10-12

Purpose: We need less HW

Audience: Miss Fielhauer

Visual: Teacher grading papers, looks exhausted and stressed. Pulls hair and moves on to different paper. Piles and Piles of paper everywhere

Voice Over: Teachers everywhere > hair are you stressed about all the <sup>15</sup> messy papers you have to grade?

Visual: Teacher nods exsaturatedly (white background) If this looks like you

Voice Over: This is why we should have less homework

Visual: Student brings in big box of more paper to grade. Sets down on teachers desk with loud thud!

Visual: Teacher puts face in hands with a loud sigh

~~Voice Over: less homework = less stress for you teachers out there!~~

~~Visual: hold up 3 pappers with less homework and = and less stress~~

Voice Over: here are 3 reasons why we should have less homework

Rylie ← madison ← Janey

Visual: Waves hand to continue

Voice Over: One reason is that all you teachers have to grade all the homework we do. And you will be exhausted after you grade all the homework. You may even spend 2-3 hours grading!

Visual: Teacher jumps in excitement.

Voice Over: secondly you would not get as stressed as you usually do while grading all that homework! So if we have less homework you would get less stressed, because you would have less to grade

Visual: teacher smiles and nods expressing that she understands

~~Voice Over: plus, the students would come to school tired and not ready to learn, because of all that homework they have to do and you teachers will have to deal with it.~~

Voice Over: And this is why we should have less homework.

Visual: teacher Shoves homework box off



# props

Rylie & Janey / Madison

- Giant box
- Giant coffee cup
- table / desk
- Chair
- paper

# parts.

Rylie / Teacher

Janey / Voice Over

Madison / Student

table and smiles happily  
and puts thumbs up

The end

October 22, 2012

Dear the Board of Education,

I know most kids think that school is boring, but I know how to fix it! We should have more experiments and activities in school, such as making obleck in first grade, and the shadow experiment in fifth grade. In fourth grade we had a science day, and one of the things we did was launch water bottles.

First, experiments and activities are better than pencil and paper. You get to see it happen right in front of you instead of writing it down on paper. Kids get tired of just writing everything down.

In addition, they are hands on. For instance you will have to set it up, do it, and clean it up. For example, if you are mixing chemicals they won't just float up in the air, and pour itself will it?? NO!!! You have to pick it up yourself.

Another thing is that kids will pay more attention in discussions. So, they will know what to do. Kids will learn more because experiments are more fun and interesting.

Lastly, we should have more experiments and activities in school, because kids will pay more attention and participate more. So that's why I think we should have more experiments and activities in school.

Sincerely,  
Ashton

Dear General Public,

I have been noticing in my own experiences, kids haven't been making enough money to buy stuff. Therefore, I am trying to find a solution to all those problems; kids should be able to get a job.

Initially, kids can't make enough money on chores or smaller jobs to buy those cool new cloths, that fun game, that cool toy, or that brand new phone. I, for example, only make 10\$ a week. And sometimes I don't make a thing. If kids could get jobs, those problems won't be around anymore.

Furthermore, if kids can get jobs at a young age, then if they get a better job when they grow up, they'll know what's expected. For example, you have to get there on time, work hard all day, do the right, not the wrong, and make sure nothing happens to the machines if the job requires them. Although the kids might not understand the job or how to work the machines. But that's why you teach them, if their responsible enough, they'll do it right.

Thirdly, if littler kids have jobs at the fast food places, then teens could get better paying jobs, then parents could get even better paying jobs. If that all happens, we might not have to worry about not having enough money to pay for bills or taxes. There will be no such thing as homeless people. Everyone would be happier. The world would be a better place.

To sum it up, if kids could get jobs, it could end money problems. So, please consider letting kids at least apply for jobs.

Sincerely,  
Draven

October 24, 2012

Dear PTA Members,

I've noticed that when I am outside at recess injuries happen because of the balance beams. I think they are too dangerous. I have seen 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> grade on them and they seem to enjoy them. But some of those students have gotten hurt. I think we should get rid of the balance beams.

The first reason is that students push each other off. I know this because I have seen it before. The students didn't get injured when they got pushed off but there is a chance they could've gotten badly injured.

Secondly, I know someone who got hurt. She told me that she was walking on one then slipped. She had a bruise on her leg and jaw. She did not break any bones but she could've.

My last reason is that students try to run on them. It is very dangerous because then the balance beam or your shoes could be slippery. I also in my experience have seen kids trying to run on them.

In conclusion, I think we should get rid of the balance beams at Legend Elementary. They are too dangerous, students run on them, and students get pushed off. I think we should get rid of the balance beams at Legend. If we get rid of the balance beams fewer students would get injured. So, please think about this letter.

Sincerely,  
Janey



October 24, 2012

Dear Baseball Leagues of America,

I am a 10 year old girl who lives 5 minutes away from a baseball field. I play baseball and I'm on my first year varsity. I only have one year left of baseball because where I live they don't let girls play 7<sup>th</sup> grade ball, 8th grade ball and so on. Baseball is my life. I think girls should be allowed to play baseball above the varsity level.

First of all, some girls like baseball more than softball. In 2008, 1,012 girls played on high school baseball teams, says the national federation of state high school associations. But in many states, the high school teams are not available for girls.

Secondly, if girls don't know how to play softball and they switch from baseball to softball it will be very hard because they won't know how to play. Because a softball diamond is a lot smaller than a baseball diamond, softball bats cannot be bigger than 2 ¼ inches or longer than 34in and a baseball bats cannot be bigger than 42in or thicker than 2 ¾, and the pitchers mounds are different. The baseball mound is 60 feet from home plate and a softball mound is 50 feet away from home plate.

Thirdly, people say girls aren't built like boys and can't take pain. Well if you know the rules of baseball then you wouldn't get hurt as easily as you would if you did know how to play. Let's say you're 12 years old and you decide you want to play baseball so on your first game you're up to bat and you get hit well you probably wouldn't of got hit if you know the rules of baseball.

In conclusion, I think girls should be able to play baseball above the varsity level. You baseball leagues should let girls play baseball instead of softball. Last year a boy named Noah on my team said, "If you have to go to softball Rylie, than I will too." Now that shows respect.

Sincerely,  
Rylie

#### Opinion Writing Rubric

Writing Quality	4	3	2	1
<b>Clear topic and point of view</b>	My piece has a clear topic and opinion statement. "I	My piece has a topic and opinion	My piece has an opinion, but it is a	My piece does not have a clear opinion

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student A**

Scaled Score—Level 4 (Above Proficient) Writing, Level 4 (Above Proficient) Reading

5<sup>th</sup> Grade Writing Sample

Even though zoos aren't a perfect solution, we should support zoos because they help protect endangered animals. Sometimes animals are in trouble in the wild. They don't have enough to eat, or they are endangered.

Sometimes endangered animals are in trouble in the wild because there isn't enough to eat. For example, Tom French, who won a Pulitzer Prize as a journalist, studied elephants in many zoos, and he wrote a book about them. It's called *Zoo Story*. It turns out that there are too many elephants in South Africa. There isn't enough food for them and there isn't enough food for the rhino, because the elephants eat all the trees. So when elephants get moved to zoos, it might save their lives and it might help some other animals too. Tom French shows that in good zoos like the one in San Diego, there are clinics with experts who will care for the elephants. The article says "the animal clinic at the San Diego Zoo was better than any hospital in Swaziland."

Another thing that zoos help with is breeding endangered animals. One Fox News program showed how local zoos can help breed endangered animals and then set them back in the wild. That seems like a good idea. If we could use zoos to breed these animals, and then put them back in the wild, maybe they wouldn't be endangered.

On the other hand, animals in zoos don't always live a long time. They seem to live a lot longer in the wild. But the chart that shows how long elephants live in the wild is only counting the elephants who live at all. It doesn't count the ones who die of starvation because there are no trees, or the ones who get shot by poachers. Tom French shows that's what happens to lots of elephants. You might worry about zoochosis, too. That's when animals get lonely and sad in zoos. But it sounds like the San Diego zoo takes good care of its elephants. And it's probably pretty lonely when you face a poacher who wants your tusks.

Overall, it seems like zoos are a good idea, as long as they take good care of the animals. They can rescue endangered animals, and they can breed them so they won't be so endangered. It would be even better if we could stop destroying their land. But since we're not endangered, that's probably not going to happen.

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student A**

Annotations

Even though zoos aren't a perfect solution, we should support zoos because they help protect endangered animals.

**Comment [1]: Focus—Makes a Claim, Level 4:** Clearly states a provocative and nuanced claim that takes a position on the topic of zoos. (W.5.1.a)

Sometimes endangered animals are in trouble in the wild because there isn't enough to eat... So when elephants get moved to zoos, it might save their lives and it might help some other animals too... Another thing that zoos help with is breeding endangered animals... On the other hand, animals in zoos don't always live a long time...But it sounds like the San Diego zoo takes good care of its elephants.

**Comment [2]: Structure—Organizes Information, Level 4:** Ideas, reasons, facts, and details are grouped into cohesive sections or paragraphs, which are strategically ordered in a way that strengthens the impact of the claim—in this case, the arguments for the claim are raised first and then a counterargument is considered and rejected at the end. (W.5.1.a & W.5.1.b)

Even though zoos aren't a perfect solution, we should support zoos because they help protect endangered animals. Sometimes animals are in trouble in the wild. They don't have enough to eat, or they are endangered.

Overall, it seems like zoos are a good idea, as long as they take good care of the animals. They can rescue endangered animals, and they can breed them so they won't be so endangered. It would be even better if we could stop destroying their land. But since we're not endangered, that's probably not going to happen.

**Comment [KF3]: : Structure—Introduction, Level 3:** Orients the reader with an introduction to the topic and to the claim. (W.5.1.a)

For example, Tom French, who won a Pulitzer Prize as a journalist, studied elephants in many zoos, and he wrote a book about them. It's called *Zoo Story*... One Fox News program showed how local zoos can help breed endangered animals and then set them back in the wild... You might worry about zoochosis, too.

**Comment [4]: Structure—Conclusion, Level 4:** Provides a compelling concluding statement or section that builds on the claim and the supports and engages the intended audience. (W.5.1.d)

For example... So... Another thing... On the other hand... But... Overall...

**Comment [5]: Elaboration—Provides Evidence, Level 4:** Cites specific sources to account for most pieces of evidence, in addition to clearly linking each piece of evidence to the reason it supports. (W.5.1.b)

**Elaboration—Supports Claim, Level 4:** The reasons, facts, and details are accurate and support the stated claim. They come from multiple sources. This writer does not include direct quotations, but he/she does include many well-chosen paraphrased facts from the texts. (W.5.1.b)

**Comment [6]: Craft—Transitions, Level 4:** Uses transitional words and phrases, including some that are more sophisticated, in this case ones that deal with compare and contrast, such as "on the other hand...but..." when the writer raises and rejects the counterargument. (W.5.1.c)

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student A**

**Summary:**

This student is a level 4 (above proficient) writer according to our rubric. He/she writes a clear introduction, including a provocative and nuanced claim that takes a position on the topic. The essay is organized into cohesive paragraphs that support the claim and that are strategically ordered to give the essay greater impact. A variety of transitions are used to make this structure flow well. The writer also provides evidence and shows how it supports the claim, drawing from three sources and citing the sources of information.

<b>Criterion and Score Point</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Instructional Next Steps To meet the CCSS the student needs to:</b>
<b>Focus—Makes a Claim</b> 4 Above Proficient	The writer clearly states a provocative and nuanced claim that takes a position on the topic of zoos.	The student has met and exceeded the CCSS.
<b>Structure—Organizes Information</b> 4 Above Proficient	The writer’s ideas, reasons, facts, and details are grouped into cohesive sections or paragraphs, which are strategically ordered in a way that strengthens the impact of the claim—in this case, the arguments for the claim are raised first and then a counterargument is considered and rejected at the end.	The student has met and exceeded the CCSS.
<b>Structure—Introduction</b> 3 Proficient	The writer orients the reader with an introduction to the topic and to the claim.	The student has met the CCSS.  The next step is to teach the student to engage the reader with a compelling introduction that introduces the topic as well as the claim.
<b>Structure—</b>	The writer provides a	The student has met and



**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student A**

<p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <p>4 Above Proficient</p>	<p>compelling concluding statement or section that builds on the claim and the supports and engages the intended audience.</p>	<p>exceeded the CCSS.</p>
<p><b>Elaboration— Provides Evidence</b></p> <p>4 Above Proficient</p>	<p>The writer cites specific sources to account for most pieces of evidence, in addition to clearly linking each piece of evidence to the reason it supports.</p>	<p>The student has met and exceeded the CCSS.</p> <p>The next step is to teach the student to cite all pieces of evidence.</p>
<p><b>Elaboration— Supports Claim</b></p> <p>4 Above Proficient</p>	<p>The reasons, facts, and details are accurate and support the stated claim. They come from multiple sources. This writer does not include direct quotations, but he/she does include many well-chosen paraphrased facts from the texts.</p>	<p>The student has met and exceeded the CCSS.</p> <p>The next step is to teach the student to use direct quotations, where appropriate.</p>
<p><b>Craft— Transitions</b></p> <p>4 Above Proficient</p>	<p>Uses transitional words and phrases, including some that are more sophisticated, in this case ones that deal with compare and contrast, such as “on the other hand...but...” when the writer raises and rejects the counterargument</p>	<p>The student has met and exceeded the CCSS.</p> <p>The next step is to make sure the student knows how to use additional sophisticated transition words that deal with cause and effect, gradation, sequence, and similar ways to show relationships between information.</p>

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student A**

**5<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Summary Sample**

The Swazi Eleven says that elephants are endangered in the wild and are a danger to other animals. Tom French, an expert, researched elephants for six years. He found they kill the trees in South Africa so there isn't enough to eat. They are starving. The rhinos are also starving because there are too many elephants. It seems like poachers are a problem too.

Annotations

Tom French shows that in good zoos like the one in San Diego, there are clinics with experts who will care for the elephants. The article says "the animal clinic at the San Diego Zoo was better than any hospital in Swaziland." (from task 6, essay)

The Swazi Eleven says that elephants are endangered in the wild and are a danger to other animals... They are starving. The rhinos are also starving because there are too many elephants.

It seems like poachers are a problem too.

**Comment [KF7]: Citation, Level 4:** When encouraged to draw information and quotations from texts, the student provides an analysis of what the text says, embedding at least one direct quote into that analysis. (RI.5.1)

**Comment [KF8]: Understanding/Analysis, Level 3:** When referring to the text, the student demonstrates a grasp not only of the explicit meanings in the text but also of some that are implicit. (RI.5.1)

**Main Idea, Level 3:** When asked to recap the main ideas in a text, the reader states two or more main ideas from the text. (RI.5.2)

**Comment [KF9]: Support, Level 4:** When doing the above, the reader explains subtle as well as obvious connections between the main ideas and some related key details. (RI.5.2)

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student A**

**Summary:**

This student is a level 4 (above proficient) reader according to our rubric. He/she can name multiple main ideas and details in texts, grasps the explicit meanings of the texts and makes a few supported inferences, and provides a few key details that support the main ideas named. When using information from a text in an essay, he/she accurately embeds quotations to support analysis of a text.

<b>Criterion and Score Point</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Instructional Next Steps To meet the CCSS the student needs to:</b>
<b>Citation</b>  4 Above Proficient	When encouraged to draw information and quotations from texts, the student provides an analysis of what the text says, embedding at least one direct quote into that analysis.	The student has met and exceeded the CCSS.
<b>Understanding/Analysis</b>  3 Proficient	When referring to the text, the student demonstrates a grasp not only of the explicit meanings in the text but also of some that are implicit.	The student has met the CCSS.  The next step might be to teach the student to analyze implicit and explicit meanings in the text.
<b>Main Idea</b>  3 Proficient	When asked to recap the main ideas in a text, the reader states two or more main ideas from the text.	The student has met the CCSS.  The next step might be to teach the student to find overarching main ideas that are not explicitly stated in the text.

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student A**

<p><b>Support</b></p> <p>4 Above Proficient</p>	<p>The reader explains subtle as well as obvious connections between the main ideas and some related key details.</p>	<p>The student has met and exceeded the CCSS.</p> <p>The next step might be to teach the student to indicate the relative value of these details as support, perhaps by pointing out which give the most important support.</p>
<p><b>Summarizing</b></p> <p>4 Above Proficient</p>	<p>The reader provides an accurate summary of the whole of the text, embellishing this with some well-chosen details.</p>	<p>The student has met and exceeded the CCSS.</p>

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student B**

Scaled Score—Level 3 (Proficient) Writing, Level 3 (Proficient) Reading

5<sup>th</sup> Grade Writing Sample

People are wondering if animals are better off in the wild, or in zoos. Well I think animals should be in the wild!

I think animals should be in the wild because sometimes the animals aren't as free. In the article "Zoochosis" it said "Animals kept in cages were grabbing onto the bars and shaking them" also "If you could look into the animals eyes, you would have seen deep sadness!" This shows that animals are better off in the wild, because they aren't as free!

Another reason why animals are better off in the wild because of their life spans. For the African Elephants, in the wild they are 56 years, but in zoos it's 17 years. For the Asian Elephants it's 42 years in the wild, and in the zoos it's 19 years! This proves that animals are better off in the wild...

In conclusion this proves that animals live better in the wild than the zoos!

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student B**

Annotations

Well I think animals should be in the wild!

I think animals should be in the wild because sometimes the animals aren't as free...  
Another reason why animals are better off in the wild because of there life spans.

People are wondering if animals are better of in the wild or in zoo's. Well I think animals should be in the wild!

In conclusion this proves that animals live better in the wild

In the article "Zoochosis" it said "Animals kept in cages were grabbing onto the bars and shaking them" also "If you could look into the animals eyes you would have seen deep sadness!" This shows that animals are better if in the wild, because they aren't as free!

Another reason why... This proves that... In conclusion...

**Summary:**

This student is a level 3 (proficient) writer according to our rubric. He/she writes a clear introduction with a claim that takes a position on the topic. The essay is organized into cohesive paragraphs that support the claim, although they do not seem ordered in a way designed to make the argument stronger. The writer also provides evidence and shows how it supports the claim, drawing from two sources and citing the source of information. The writer uses several transition words and phrases to link parts of the essay and make it flow smoothly.

**Comment [KF1]: Focus—Makes a Claim, Level 3:** The writer clearly states a claim that takes a position on the topic of animals in the wild vs. zoos. (W.5.1.a)

**Comment [KF2]: Structure—Organizes Information, Level 3:** Ideas, reasons, facts, and details are grouped into cohesive sections or paragraphs, and these sections are logically ordered, but there is no sense that the order was chosen strategically, and the order does not strengthen the impact of the claim. While arguably the information about life spans is more striking than about freedom, the writer does not angle the paragraphs in a way that suggests this is intended to be a stronger reason. (W.5.1.a & W.5.1.b)

**Comment [KF3]: Structure—Introduction, Level 3:** Orients the reader with an introduction to the topic and to the claim. (W.5.1.a)

**Comment [KF4]: Structure—Conclusion, Level 3:** Provides a concluding statement or section related to the claim. (W.5.1.d)

**Comment [KF5]: Elaboration—Provides Evidence, Level 4:** Cites specific sources to account for most pieces of evidence (Zoochosis is cited, although the chart about elephant lifespan is not cited), in addition to clearly linking each piece of evidence to the reason it supports. (W.5.1.b)

**Elaboration—Supports Claim, Level 4:** The reasons, facts, and details are accurate and support the stated claim. They come from multiple sources and include direct quotations. (W.5.1.b)

**Comment [KF6]: Craft—Transitions, Level 3:** Uses a variety of transitional phrases to link opinion and reasons, and reasons to supporting facts and details. (W.5.1.c)

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student B**

<b>Criterion and Score Point</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Instructional Next Steps To meet the CCSS the student needs to:</b>
<b>Focus—Makes a Claim</b>  3 Proficient	The writer clearly states a claim that takes a position on the topic of animals in the wild vs. zoos.	The student has met the CCSS.  The next step is to teach the student to make a claim that is more nuanced.
<b>Structure—Organizes Information</b>  3 Proficient	Ideas, reasons, facts, and details are grouped into cohesive sections or paragraphs, and these sections are logically ordered, but there is no sense that the order was chosen strategically, and the order does not strengthen the impact of the claim. While arguably the information about life spans is more striking than about freedom, the writer does not angle the paragraphs in a way that suggests this is intended to be a stronger reason.	The student has met the CCSS.  The next step might be to teach the student to strategically order paragraphs in a way that will strengthen the impact of the claim.
<b>Structure—Introduction</b>  3 Proficient	The writer orients the reader with an introduction to the topic and to the claim.	The student has met the CCSS.  The next step might be to teach the student to make the introduction compelling to the reader, rather than just giving an overview and stating the claim.
<b>Structure—Conclusion</b>	The writer provides a concluding statement or section related to the	The student has met the CCSS.

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student B**

3 Proficient	claim.	The next step might be to teach the student to make the conclusion compelling and to build on the claim rather than simply restating it.
<b>Elaboration— Provides Evidence</b>  4 Above Proficient	The writer cites specific sources to account for most pieces of evidence (Zoochosis is cited, although the chart about elephant lifespan is not cited), in addition to clearly linking each piece of evidence to the reason it supports.	The student has met and exceeded the CCSS.  The next step might be to teach the student to cite all pieces of evidence.
<b>Elaboration— Supports Claim</b>  4 Above Proficient	The reasons, facts, and details are accurate and support the stated claim. They come from multiple sources and include direct quotations.	The student has met and exceeded the CCSS.
<b>Craft— Transitions</b>  3 Proficient	The writer uses a variety of transitional phrases to link opinion and reasons, and reasons to supporting facts and details.	The student has met the CCSS.  The next step might be to teach the student to use sophisticated transition words that deal with cause and effect, gradation, sequence, and similar ways to show relationships between information.



TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student B

5<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Summary Sample

## Summary of "Swazi Eleven"

Mike and his dad was doing a really nice thing for the elephants. There taking them to the zoo where they can be more safe!

But then someone said, it's not a good Idea to bring them to the zoo. But Mike fought back saying that they were ruining the trees and the grass! So finally they agrued, that 4 elephants were going to Tampa in the Lowrey Park Zoo and 7 of them were going to headed san Diego! So that wally the 11 elephants are going to be pit into zoo's.

### Annotations

In the article "Zoochosis" it said "Animals kept in cages were grabbing onto the bars and shaking them" also "If you could look into the animals eyes you would have seen deep sadness!" This shows that animals are better if in the wild, because they aren't as free! (from task 6, essay)

Mike and his dad was doing a really nice thing for the elephants! There taking them to the zoo where they can be more safe! But Mike fought back saying that they were ruining the trees and the grass!

**Comment [KF7]: Citation, Level 4:** When encouraged to draw information and quotations from texts, the student provides an analysis of what the text says, embedding at least one direct quote into that analysis. In this case, the latter quote is slightly different from the text, but the problem seems to be that the student hasn't been taught how to abridge quotations using ellipses, rather than a reading comprehension problem. (RI.5.1)

**Comment [KF8]: Understanding/Analysis, Level 3:** When referring to the text, the student demonstrates a grasp not only of the explicit meanings in the text but also of some that are implicit. (RI.5.1)

**Main Idea, Level 3:** When asked to recap the main ideas in a text, the reader states two or more main ideas from the text. (RI.5.2)

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student B**

...saying that they were ruining the trees and the grass...4 elephants were going to Tampa in the Lowrey Park Zoo and 7 of them were going to headed San Diego! So that way the 11 elephants are going to be put in zoos!

**Comment [KF9]: Support, Level 3:** When doing the above, the reader explains how the main ideas of the text are supported by key details. (RI.5.2)

**Summary:**

This student is a level 3 (proficient) reader according to our rubric. He/she can name multiple main ideas and details in texts, grasps the explicit meanings of the texts and makes a few supported inferences, and provides a few key details that support the main ideas named. When using information from texts in a piece of writing, he/she embeds quotes in an analysis of the text.

<b>Criterion and Score Point</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Instructional Next Steps To meet the CCSS the student needs to:</b>
<b>Citation</b>  4 Above Proficient	When encouraged to draw information and quotations from texts, the student provides an analysis of what the text says, embedding at least one direct quote into that analysis. In this case, the latter quote is slightly different from the text, but the problem seems to be that the student hasn't been taught how to abridge quotations using ellipses, rather than a reading comprehension problem	The student has met and exceeded the CCSS.  The next step might be to teach the student the correct conventions for altering or abridging a quote, using ellipses to show words that were removed and brackets to show words that were changed. The correct quotation would be something like "If you could [look into their] eyes... you would have seen deep sadness."
<b>Understanding/Analysis</b>  3 Proficient	When referring to the text, the student demonstrates a grasp not only of the explicit meanings in the text but also of some that are implicit.	The student has met the CCSS.  The next step might be to teach the student to analyze implicit and explicit meanings in the text.

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student B**

<p><b>Main Idea</b> 3 Proficient</p>	<p>When asked to recap the main ideas in a text, the reader states two or more main ideas from the text.</p>	<p>The student has met the CCSS.  The next step might be to teach the student to find overarching main ideas that are not explicitly stated in the text.</p>
<p><b>Support</b> 3 Proficient</p>	<p>The reader explains how the main ideas of the text are supported by key details.</p>	<p>The student has met the CCSS.  The next step might be to teach the reader to explain subtle as well as obvious connections between the main ideas and some related key details, and to teach the reader to indicate the relative value of these details as support</p>
<p><b>Summarizing</b> 4 Above Proficient</p>	<p>The reader provides an accurate summary of the whole of the text, embellishing this with some well-chosen details.</p>	<p>The student has met and exceeded the CCSS.</p>

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work**

Scaled Score—Level 2 (Intermediate) Writing, Level 2 (Intermediate)  
Reading

5<sup>th</sup> Grade Writing Sample

I think, in my own opinion, that zoos should stay, only if they have endangered animals in their. Not animals that are healthy.

I say that because their once was a whale, killer whale, named Junior. He was removed from his habitat in Iceland and placed in a tank in niagra falls. He died four years later. He DIED. Before any of this happend.

Also, sometimes when animals have this disease called zoochosis, which is what happend to Junior, they start to strange things. Like continuously running around in circles, moving their head and neck around, and tearing holes in their own skin.

Can you imagine being so miserable that you want to inflict harm on yourself?

Please, dont do such things like this

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student C**

Annotations

I think, In my own opinion, that zoo's should stay. Only if they have indangered animals in them. Not animals that are Healthy.

I say that because their once was a Whale, Killer whale, named Junior. He was removed from his Habitat in Iceland, and Placed in a tank in niagra falls. He died four years later. He DIED. Before any of this happend.

Please, don't do such things like this

Also, sometimes when animals have this disease called zoochosis, Which is what happened to Junior, they start to strange things. Like contiuously running around in circles, moving their head and neck around, and tearing holes in their own skin.

I say that because... Also...

**Comment [KF1]: Focus—Makes a Claim, Level 2:** The writer's claim is nuanced, but since endangered and healthy are not opposite categories, the claim as written is jumbled and unclear. (W.5.1.a)

**Structure—Introduction, Level 2:** States a claim without any other introduction. (W.5.1.a)

**Comment [KF2]: Structure—Organizes Information, Level 2:** Ideas, reasons, facts, and details are grouped into sections or paragraphs that feel mostly cohesive, but also include some information that does not seem to fit. These sections or paragraphs appear to be in no particular order. (W.5.1.a & W.5.1.b)

**Comment [KF3]: Structure—Conclusion, Level 2:** Provides a concluding statement or sentences that is not clearly related to the claim and may feel abrupt or insufficient. (W.5.1.d)

**Comment [KF4]: Elaboration—Provides Evidence, Level 1:** Includes some facts and details, but does not give reasons for their inclusion. (W.5.1.b)

**Elaboration—Supports Claim, Level 2:** The reasons, facts, and details mostly support an unstated claim that can be easily inferred. In this case, they support the claim that zoos are harmful to animals. (W.5.1.b)

**Comment [KF5]: Craft—Transitions, Level 3:** The writer uses some transitional phrases but they are lower level transitions. (W.5.1.c)

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student C**

**Summary:**

This student is a level 2 (intermediate) writer according to our rubric. He/she writes an introduction with a clear and nuanced claim that takes a position on the topic, but the claim is not clearly supported. The essay is organized into mostly cohesive paragraphs that relate to the claim. The writer provides evidence that supports part of the claim—the part about zoos being harmful—although the connection between the information and the claim is never made clear. The writer draws information from a source but does not cite it, and uses a couple simple transition words and phrases to link parts of the essay.

<b>Criterion and Score Point</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Instructional Next Steps To meet the CCSS the student needs to:</b>
<b>Focus—Makes a Claim</b>  2 Intermediate	The writer’s claim is nuanced, but since endangered and healthy are not opposite categories, the claim as written is jumbled and unclear.	The next step might be to teach the student that clarity matters, and writers get this through multiple drafts and by being critics of their rough draft work. Even a sentence-length claim can be rewritten many times. ‘How else could I say this?’ is a great question. The writer needs to think about what he/she is really trying to say about the topic and aim to communicate that idea.
<b>Structure—Organizes Information</b>  2 Intermediate	Ideas, reasons, facts, and details are grouped into sections or paragraphs that feel mostly cohesive, but also include some information that does not seem to fit. These sections or paragraphs appear to be in no particular order.	The next step might be to teach the student to notice the topic in paragraphs when reading, almost writing subheadings for a paragraph or two. Then the student can reread his/her draft, seeing if one subheadings would work for a paragraph, deleting extraneous information. The student can become accustomed to planning a text with parallel categories—organized by time, kinds, etc.
<b>Structure—Introduction</b>  2 Intermediate	The writer states a claim without any other introduction	The next step might be to teach the student to orient the reader to the topic in the introduction before stating the claim. Studying mentor texts could help, or trying this orally with a partner.
<b>Structure—Conclusion</b>  2 Intermediate	The writer provides a concluding statement or sentences that is not clearly related to the claim and feels abrupt or	The next step might be to teach the student to relate the conclusion to the claim of the essay. Studying mentor texts might help, and learning kinds of conclusions.

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student C**

	insufficient.	
<b>Elaboration— Provides Evidence</b>  1 Novice	The writer includes some facts and details, but does not give reasons for their inclusion	The next step might be to teach the student to connect facts and details to the reasons they support. Students can reread their writing and add parts that do this.
<b>Elaboration— Supports Claim</b>  2 Intermediate	The reasons, facts, and details mostly support an unstated claim that can be easily inferred. In this case, they support the claim that zoos are harmful to animals.	The next step is to teach the student to have all reasons, facts, and details relate to the stated claim.
<b>Craft— Transitions</b>  2 Intermediate	The writer uses some transitional phrases but they are lower level transitions.	The next step is to teach the student to use a variety of transitional words and phrases that are high level, and to use them to link reasons to support within a section as well as to link between sections.

TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student C

5<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Summary Sample

The Swazi Eleven

That the place the elephants  
were going to which by the way  
is to the animal clinic in the San  
Diego zoo. better than any hospital  
in Swaziland.



airplane  
the animals  
were restless  
hungry  
but better  
off where they  
they were  
heading.

Zoo offered to pay \$1200 for  
each elephant.



**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student C**

Annotations

I say that because their once was a Whale, Killer whale, named Junior. He was removed from his Habitat in Iceland, and Placed in a tank in niagra falls. He died four years later... Can you imagine being so miserable that you want to inflict harm on yourself? (from task 6, essay)

the animals were restless hungry but better off where they they were heading.

That the Place the elephants were going to which by the way is to the animal clinic in the San Diego Zoos. better than any hospital in Swaziland.

**Comment [KF6]: Citation, Level 2:** When encouraged to draw information and quotations from texts, the writer refers to details by paraphrasing from the text. The author also draws exact quotes, though these are not correctly formatted or attributed to the source. (RI.5.1)

**Comment [KF7]: Understanding/Analysis, Level 2:** When referring to the text, the student demonstrates an understanding of only the parts of the text that are written about explicitly. The student shows an ability to grasp and retell those parts. (RI.5.1)

**Main Idea, Level 2:** When asked to recap the main ideas in a text, the reader states just one main idea from the text. (RI.5.2)

**Comment [KF8]: Support, Level 1:** When doing the above, the reader restates information from the text without explaining its connection to a main idea or ideas. (RI.5.2)

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student C**

**Summary:**

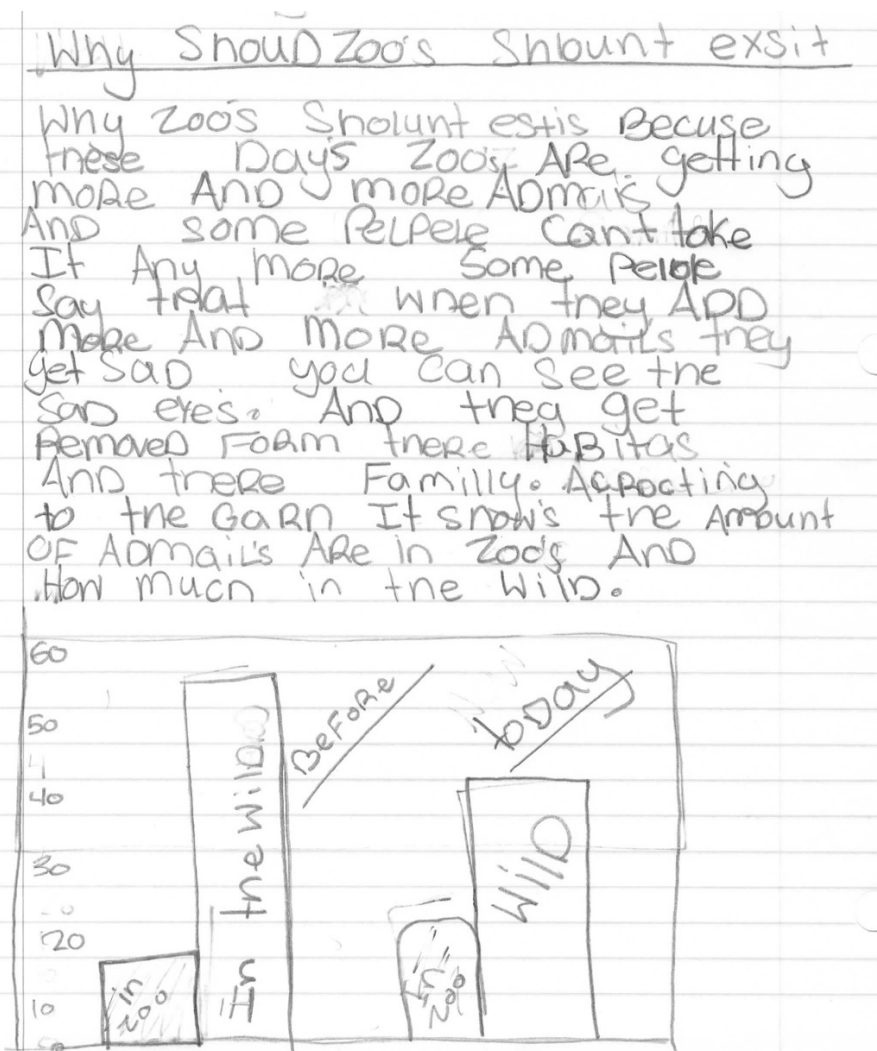
This student is a level 2 (intermediate) reader according to our rubric. He/she can name a main idea, grasps some of the explicit meanings of the text, and provides a few key details, though these details are not connected to the main idea named. The resulting summary feels like a loose collection of information that is not yet synthesized.

<b>Criterion and Score Point</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Instructional Next Steps To meet the CCSS the student needs to:</b>
<b>Citation</b>  2 Intermediate	When encouraged to draw information and quotations from texts, the writer refers to details by paraphrasing from the text. The author also draws exact quotes, though these are not correctly formatted or attributed to the source.	The next step is to teach the student how to format quotes from the text, using quotation marks and attributing the words to their source.
<b>Understanding/Analysis</b>  2 Intermediate	When referring to the text, the student demonstrates an understanding of only the parts of the text that are written about explicitly. The student shows an ability to grasp and retell those parts.	The next step is to teach the student to infer the implicit meanings in the text in addition to noticing the explicit ones.
<b>Main Idea</b>  2 Intermediate	When asked to recap the main ideas in a text, the reader states just one main idea from the text.	The next step is to teach the student to find two or more main ideas in a text.
<b>Support</b>  1 Novice	The reader restates information from the text without explaining its connection to a main idea(s).	The next step is to teach the student to explain how the key details give support to the main idea(s) stated.
<b>Summarizing</b>  1 Novice	The reader recounts parts of the text but fails to synthesize into a summary.	The next step is to teach the student to put together information in a way that creates a summary of the whole text.

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student D**

Scaled Score—Level 1 (Novice) Writing, Level 1 (Novice) Reading

5<sup>th</sup> Grade Writing Sample



**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student D**

Annotations

Why zoo's sholunt estis Because...

...these Days zoos are getting more And more ADmals And some Pelpele cant take It Any more Some Pelole say that when they ADD more And more ADmailS they get Sad.

And How much in the Wild.

AND they get Removed Form there HaBitas ANd there Family.

**Comment [KF1]: Focus—Makes a Claim, Level 3:** The writer clearly states a claim that takes a position on the topic of zoos. (W.5.1.a)

**Structure—Introduction, Level 1:** Launches directly into supporting information without any introduction. (W.5.1.a)

**Comment [KF2]: Structure—Organizes Information, Level 1:** Includes ideas, reasons, facts, and/or details, but these appear to be in no particular order. (W.5.1.a & W.5.1.b)

**Comment [KF3]: Structure—Conclusion, Level 1:** Ends the essay seemingly in the middle of a section, with no sense of closure. (W.5.1.d)

**Comment [KF4]: Elaboration—Provides Evidence, Level 1:** Includes some facts and details, but does not give reasons for their inclusion. (W.5.1.b)

**Supports Claim, Level 2:** The reasons, facts, and details mostly support the stated claim, though they include some misinformation. At least some of them come from relevant sources. (W.5.1.b)

**Craft—Transitions, Level 1:** Does not use transitional phrases to link opinion and reasons. (W.5.1.c)

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student D**

**Summary:**

This student is a level 1 (novice) writer according to our rubric. He/she states a claim that takes a clear position on the topic, but the claim is not clearly supported. The essay includes facts and details that support the stated claim but that are not arranged in any particular order and do not include an introduction or a conclusion. The evidence given includes misinformation, especially in the graph included. Transition words and phrases are not used.

<b>Criterion and Score Point</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Instructional Next Steps To meet the CCSS the student needs to:</b>
<b>Focus—Makes a Claim</b>  3 Proficient	The writer clearly states a claim that takes a position on the topic of zoos.	The student has met the CCSS.  The next step might be to teach the student the conventions required to make the claim easily comprehensible to all readers, and to put the claim in a sentence of its own rather than immediately launching into the evidence. This writer could be encouraged to take time with each part of an essay.
<b>Structure—Organizes Information</b>  1 Novice	The writer includes ideas, reasons, facts, and/or details, but these appear to be in no particular order.	The next step might be to teach the student to organize ideas into sections or paragraphs and to put these in a logical order. The student might profit by learning about possible sequences and seeing these in texts he or she reads (temporal, kinds, general-to-specific, similarities then differences.)

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student D**

<p><b>Structure— Introduction</b></p> <p>1 Novice</p>	<p>The writer launches directly into supporting information without any introduction.</p>	<p>The next step is to teach the student to include an introduction, in order to orient the reader to the topic.</p>
<p><b>Structure— Conclusion</b></p> <p>1 Novice</p>	<p>The writer ends the essay seemingly in the middle of a section, with no sense of closure.</p>	<p>The next step is to teach the student to include a concluding statement or section that relates to the claim.</p>
<p><b>Elaboration— Provides Evidence</b></p> <p>1 Novice</p>	<p>The writer includes some facts and details, but does not give reasons for their inclusion.</p>	<p>The next step is to teach the student to connect facts and details to the reasons they support.</p>
<p><b>Elaboration— Supports Claim</b></p> <p>2 Intermediate</p>	<p>The reasons, facts, and details mostly support the stated claim, though they include some misinformation. At least some of them come from relevant sources.</p>	<p>The next step is to teach the student to have all reasons, facts, and details relate to the stated claim.</p>
<p><b>Craft— Transitions</b></p> <p>1 Novice</p>	<p>The writer does not use transitional phrases to link opinion and reasons.</p>	<p>The next step is to teach the student to use transition words and phrases to link opinion and reasons.</p>

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student D**

5<sup>th</sup> Grade Reading Summary Sample

The Swazi Eleven  
The story was mostly about  
Mick and about the zoo about  
saving elephants and about saving  
them. I think that's important  
that's what I think is really important  
and mick with her family.  
It's really important to charter  
like wishing not to be a zoo.  
Sometimes animals feel bad.

Annotations

Some people say that when they add more and more animals they get sad you can see the sad eyes. (from task 6, essay)

the story was mostly about Mick and about the zoo about saving elephants and about saving them I think that's important that's what I think is really important and mick with her family

**Comment [KF5]: Citation, Level 2:**

When encouraged to draw information and quotations from texts, refers to details by paraphrasing from the text, although the chart referred to from the text is inaccurate. (RI.5.1)

**Comment [KF6]: Understanding/Analysis, Level 1:**

When referring to text, the student seems to grasp only the very explicit, obvious, straightforward, concrete sections of the text, and sometimes those seem to escape his or her comprehension. (RI.5.1)

**Main Idea, Level 2:** When asked to recap the main ideas in a text, the reader states one main idea, and this idea is somewhat unclear. (RI.5.2)

**Support, Level 1:** When doing the above, the reader does not restate information from the text. (RI.5.2)

**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student D**

**Summary:**

This student is a level 1 (novice) reader according to our rubric. He/she can name a main idea, though it is a bit unclear and sounds more like naming main topics. The reader grasps some of the explicit meanings of the text but does not provide any details in the summary. More details from the text are provided in the essay, though some of these are inaccurate. The reader's summary feels only loosely connected to the text.

<b>Criterion and Score Point</b>	<b>Evidence</b>	<b>Instructional Next Steps To meet the CCSS the student needs to:</b>
<b>Citation</b>  2 Intermediate	When encouraged to draw information and quotations from texts, refers to details by paraphrasing from the text, although the chart referred to from the text is inaccurate.	The next step might be to teach the student how to quote from the text and to go back to check that information included from the text is accurate. The writer could learn to start and end with the quote and to embed the attribution. Studying published examples could help.
<b>Understanding/Analysis</b>  1 Novice	When referring to text, the student seems to grasp only the very explicit, obvious, straightforward, concrete sections of the text, and sometimes those seem to escape his or her comprehension.	The next step might be to teach the student to infer the implicit meanings in the text in addition to noticing the explicit ones. Asking the student to reread, searching for this, can help, and teaching provisional thinking "Could it be...Or..."



**TCRWP Nonfiction Reading and Opinion/Argument Writing  
Annotated Student Work  
Student D**

<p><b>Main Idea</b> 2 Intermediate</p>	<p>When asked to recap the main ideas in a text, the reader states one main idea, and this idea is somewhat unclear.</p>	<p>The next step might be to teach the student to find two or more main ideas in a text. Sometimes one main idea revolves around the topic (the process of arriving via Ellis Island) and another around the quality or conditions (it was risky at every step).</p>
<p><b>Support</b> 1 Novice</p>	<p>The reader does not restate information from the text.</p>	<p>The next step might be to teach the student to restate details from the text that support the main idea, and to explain how these details connect to the main idea. Readers can do this work with partners, orally.</p>
<p><b>Summarizing</b> 1 Novice</p>	<p>The summary only loosely relates to the text.</p>	<p>The next step probably involves coaching the reader to preview a text, thinking, 'What might this be about?' and to pause after reading just a bit to name the who and what of the text. Readers could do this also when listening to read alouds, for added support.</p>

Schools should keep serving chocolate milk. There should be chocolate milk because kids like it, it gives vitamins, and it gets kids in good habits. Many kids love chocolate milk – it makes them happy to see it in the cafeteria, their lunch box, at their kitchen table. Research shows that, overall, chocolate milk is pretty good for kids.

It's especially important that kids like chocolate milk. It turns out that more kids drink milk, when they can get chocolate milk. When you interview a lot of parents, like Katie Couric did, they'll say that their kids only drink milk if they can get chocolate milk. So at least they're drinking milk. In a survey of students in this school, 84% said that they would drink more milk if they had chocolate milk available. Of those same students, 28% said that they wouldn't drink any milk at all unless it were chocolate.

Surprisingly, chocolate milk turns out to have vitamins. A nutritionist from the Dairy Association, demonstrates that chocolate milk is a good source of vitamin A, D, E, and calcium. That's a lot of vitamins and they're in something kids actually like to drink! In her information session, the nutritionist is with kids who drink chocolate milk. Their bright teeth and glossy hair illustrates that kids who love chocolate milk will be that healthy.

There's one more reason why chocolate milk should be served in schools. The famous nutritionist argued that chocolate milk has a lot less sugar and carbohydrates than soda and power drinks like gatorade. So if kids get in the habit of drinking milk in school, then they'll probably skip the sodas outside of school. The chocolate milk that is served in our school, for instance, is low fat. So it is a lot better for kids than soda. It's true that Jamie Oliver, a chef and enemy of chocolate milk, argued that chocolate milk does have added sugar. Jamie is a famous English chef who is involved with lunch for kids in schools in Los Angeles. In a shocking video, Jamie shows a school bus filled with sugar to show how much sugar school kids get from chocolate milk. But there are a lot of schoolkids in the US, and if you divide that busload up between all the kids, it will not be such a shocking amount. And if you put next to it a bus filled with the vitamins A,D,E and calcium that kids get, the picture might seem very different.

That's why we should keep serving chocolate milk at school – it gets kids to drink milk, it gives them vitamins, and it builds good habits. Personal, insider experience supports this claim. As a fifth grader, this investigator was part of an experiment to ban chocolate milk in his cafeteria. Fifth graders, though, are allowed to go out for lunch. With no chocolate milk, this luncheon-seeker started going out for pizza and coke. Gone were all the vitamins and calcium. Jamie Oliver doesn't necessarily know what happens inside schools. When something is taken away at lunch that is even a little good for you, it's not always replaced by something better, or anything at all.

In fact, the vitamins from chocolate milk may possibly be the only ones some kids get in school lunch. So keep chocolate milk, kids' main source of vitamins, good habits, and happiness.

# WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The Question: Should kids be required to take gym class every day?

??

**M**any kids do not get enough exercise. One study shows that fewer than one in four kids exercises for half an hour each day. Some people want kids to take a gym class every day. Other people say kids should exercise on their own. They believe schools should spend money on classroom needs, not gym class. Should kids have to take gym class every day?

??

## YES

What did you do after school yesterday? Did you ride your bicycle, play a fast game of basketball, or kick a soccer ball around the yard? Or were you one of the many kids who "vegged" out, watching TV or playing video games while eating a few snacks? Many parents, teachers, and health professionals think too many kids spend their free time in front of the TV instead of exercising. That's why they think all students should participate in gym class every day.

Daily exercise during school hours goes a long way toward keeping kids in good physical shape. It also provides lots of other benefits. Gym class is a refreshing change from the classroom. According to Sam Mooney, 10, of Avon, Indiana, "Taking gym is a good way to work off steam so that you'll stay calm in math class." Gym class gives kids a chance to exercise their bodies as well as their minds. It takes their minds off the pressures of learning for a while. They go back to class ready to concentrate again.

Like other classes, gym class teaches skills that kids can use and enjoy for the rest of their lives. They learn to play games like basketball and softball that they can still play when they're adults. Participating in sports and getting into good shape can be one of life's biggest pleasures. As Jennifer Solis, 11, of Clint, Texas says, "Gym is fun!"

## NO

"Instead of gym class, kids should spend time learning math and science. That will help them more in the future." This comment by Janelle Mikulca, 11, of Hazleton, Pennsylvania, sums up the opinions of many students, parents, and teachers. They think daily gym classes are unnecessary. As Jennifer Esquibel, 13, of Westminster, Colorado, says, "Schools should spend money on classroom materials, not gym class."

Most school gym classes are monopolized by the kids who are good at sports. These kids can play in their neighborhoods and on teams outside of school hours. According to Jordan Christiansen, 13, of Orem, Utah, "Gym should be optional. Some kids aren't athletic."

Another student, Matis Kleidman, 9, of Baltimore, Maryland, says, "Gym is tiring. It should be only twice a week." Kids work very hard in the classroom, learning the subjects that will help them the most later in life. Energy spent on sports and exercise detracts from the brain power they need for learning in the classroom.

No kids or teachers think that exercise is bad for kids. However, many agree that requiring kids to take gym every day is not a good idea. As Aaron Jackman, 13, of Los Angeles, California says, "Kids should work out at their own pace."

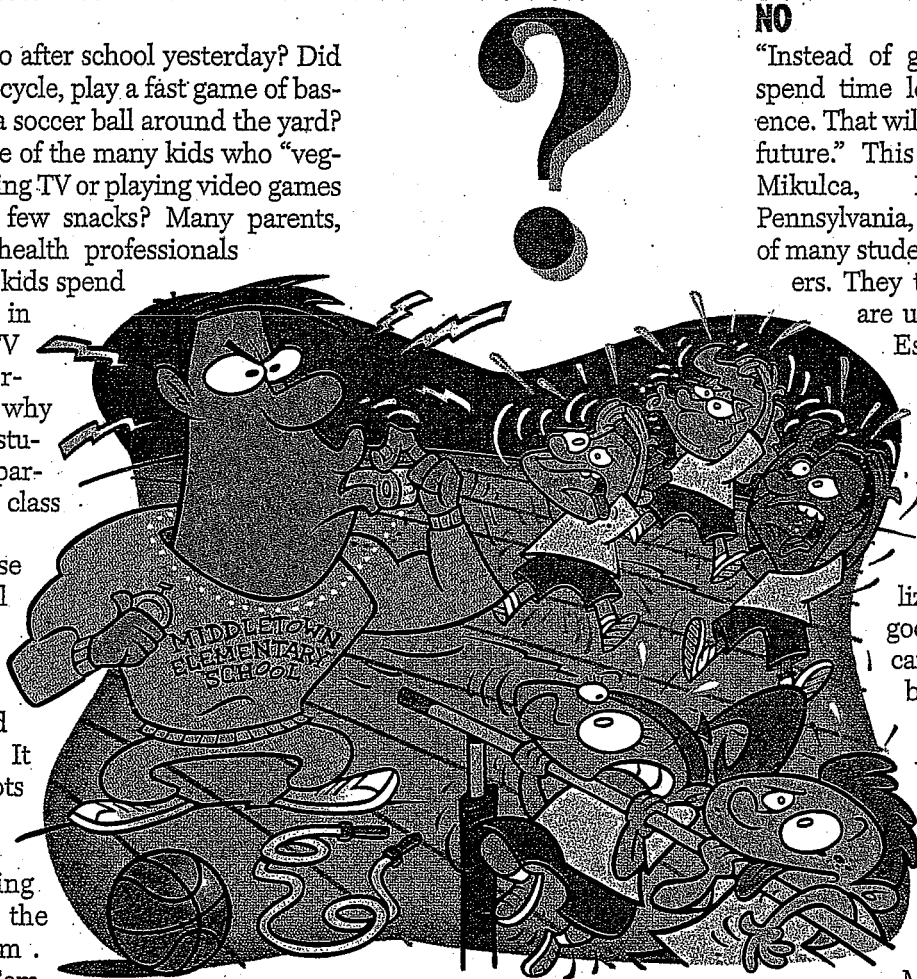


ILLUSTRATION BY DARYLL COLLINS

# HOOKED!



PHOTO-ILLUSTRATION BY DENNIS GALANTE FOR TIME FOR KIDS

It's 10 a.m. on a Saturday. Ricky Picone, 11, and his brother David, 10, are soaked in sweat. Two seconds remain in the game, and David is up by one point. Ricky grabs the ball. He shoots; he scores! "Game over. You lose!" shouts Ricky.

A morning basketball game? Sort of. Except Ricky and David are in their basement and still in pajamas. They are playing video basketball. Their parents have been calling them to come up for breakfast for 25 minutes. Mom and Dad are not too happy.

## VIDEO GAME INVASION

Sound familiar? No wonder. Video games are big in kids' lives, and in some cases they've taken over!

In 1998, 181 million video and

computer games were sold in the U.S. That's almost two games for every household. With all the cool new games, some kids can't stop playing.

You know the kids. The ones who spend more time with video games than eating or sleeping. "There's this one kid," says John Szendiuch, 12, of Pelham, New York. "They're his whole life."

When kids play all the time, parents get upset. Ron Hughes of Missouri found that he couldn't even talk to his son Russell, 9, when he was playing a video game. "The phone would ring," says Hughes, "and Russell wouldn't hear it."

Parents also worry about violence. The blood-gushing from many video games is enough to make some parents ban all video games.

## TIME'S UP

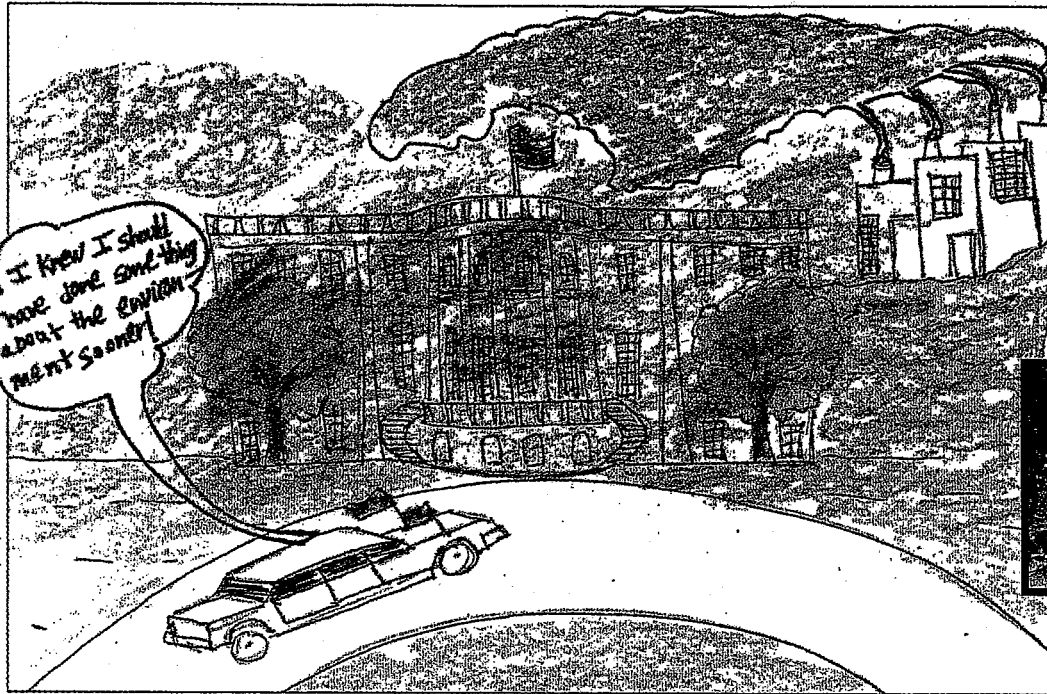
Surprisingly, experts who study kids and video games say games are not all bad. Some games build problem-solving skills. Unfortunately, kids can go overboard.

How do kids and parents keep playing under control? "It's important for parents to take an interest in what kids are playing," says expert David Walsh. Then parents can make fair rules and understand why kids love the games.

Walsh believes parents must limit kids' playing time. He recommends no more than 90 minutes a day.

But watch out! Kids are going to want to play even more. Video games are going to get bigger, brighter, and even harder for kids to resist.

# LET'S CLEAN UP THE PLANET FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS



Jared Stark, 9  
Baylis School  
Syosset, New York

Dear Mr. President,

My name is Tyler Duckworth, and I am a sixth-grade student at Liberty Middle School in Morganton, North Carolina. I think the first thing you should do, Mr. President, is take specific action to protect our environment. As an avid reader of books about science, I am concerned about the natural wonders of our nation and of the world being preserved both for my generation and for future generations. There are many reasons that this concerns me.

First of all, the pollution of our earth seems to be on the increase. Factories continue to pollute, cars continue to pollute, and people continue to pollute. If this is not stopped, the human race itself may end as we continue to destroy our air, our water, and our plants and animals. Statistics show that acid rain is on the increase and the hole in the ozone layer is widening at an alarming rate. Too little is being done to stop pollution. I feel action must be taken now, before it is too late.

Secondly, our land must be preserved. The national parks and wildlife refuges must be protected. Strict laws should be passed so that all these areas are kept safe.

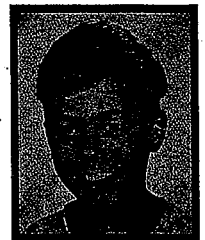
Also, the land in the rain forests is essential to our survival. Each year, more and more land in the rain forests is destroyed. If man continues to destroy the rain forests, the species present in them and the plant life present in them can never be replaced. Action must be taken, and it must be taken now, and the action taken must be firm and bound by law.

I believe that you, Mr. President, care about our country. You have stated in many speeches that I have listened to and in many articles that I have read that you care about our environment. It is essential that you, as our leader, do what is necessary to preserve the earth for future generations.

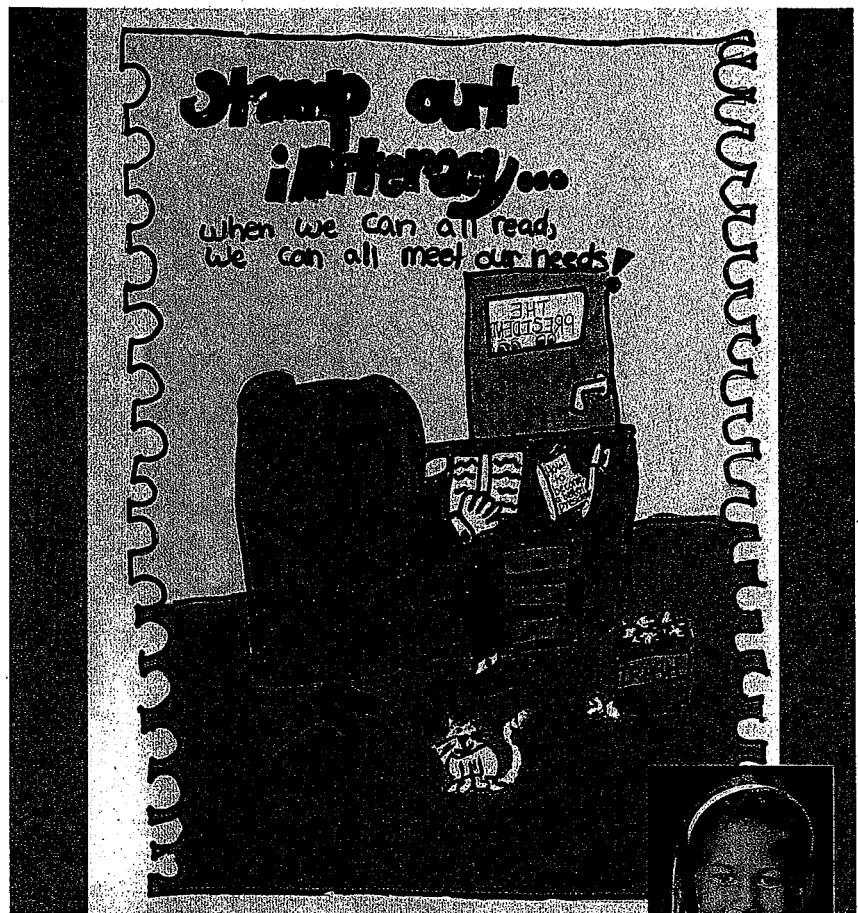
In my dad's office, he has a quote that reads, "We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children." That too is my belief as a 12-year-old citizen of the greatest country in the world—the United States of America.

Mr. President, I ask you to please act now to save our country and our world.

Sincerely,  
Tyler James Duckworth, 12  
Liberty Middle School  
Morganton, North Carolina



# EDUCATING KIDS WILL SOLVE MANY OF OUR PROBLEMS



**Martha Grace Holifield, 11,  
Jackson Academy  
Ridgeland, Mississippi**



Dear Mr. President,

If you asked me what to do first, I would tell you to improve education. Education is the most important issue of all. Education can boost the economy, prevent homelessness, help stop the spread of AIDS and help save the environment.

The President should spend more money on public schools. The money would help the schools buy much needed computers and Internet software. In California, schools are very crowded. To help this problem, more schools need to be built. More scholarships need to be available so students can have an opportunity to attend college.

Education is very important. If you have an education, you can obtain a job more easily than someone who doesn't. If you don't have an education, you probably won't earn a very good wage. You might become homeless or be on welfare. Having a good education could stop homelessness and boost the economy because more people would be working.

Education can help people know the facts about AIDS. With this knowledge, a person can hopefully make the right choice to avoid getting AIDS. In this way, education may save many people from contracting AIDS. The money saved could go into AIDS research.

Education can also help the environment. In schools, students will learn how important the environment is, and maybe they will work hard to save the earth from pollution. Students will be encouraged to recycle, reduce and reuse, therefore making the world a better place.

Just by improving education, America can help prevent future homelessness and raise awareness of AIDS, maybe even prevent some people from contracting this extremely deadly disease. Education can also help show us how to save our earth.

Mr. President, by improving education you will help people have a better life in America.

Sincerely,  
Maria Judnick, 11  
Alex Anderson Elementary  
San Jose, California



# MORE WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The Question: Should kids be cut from a school sports team?



Some people believe that every kid who wants to play on a school team should be allowed to join. These people say that a “no-cut” rule would encourage more kids to try sports. Other people say kids should be cut so that only the best players represent a school. Also, kids who have to compete for a spot might work harder to improve. Should kids be cut from school teams? What do you think?



## YES

People love to root for their favorite team, whether it's a professional baseball team or a school soccer team. They want the team to include the best players so that it can proudly compete with other teams. As Steven Juedes, 11, of Schenectady, New York says, “A school should be represented by its best athletes.” That's why school sports teams should cut the kids who are not as strong in the sport as others.

At many schools, so many students want to join teams that there's a problem with overcrowding. “Teams get too crowded without cuts. Then many kids don't get to play. No one wants to be a bench warmer!” says Kristen Avery, 13, of San Luis Obispo, California. Sitting on a bench all season is no better than not playing the sport at all. Bench warmers would be better off trying another sport.

Getting cut may not be pleasant, but it helps kids learn grown-up lessons. “Getting cut prepares kids for the future. No one gets every job he wants,” according to Drew Fong, 12, of San Jose, California. “A kid who is cut should work to improve his skills. That would give him a better chance of making a team next time,” says Steve Kordek, 13, of Elgin, Illinois.

## NO

“All kids should have the right to play on a school team. The most important thing is not winning, it's having fun.” This comment by Sam Reals, 10, of Napoleon, Michigan, states the best reason for not cutting kids from school sports teams. Playing an interesting sport, improving your skills, and making new friends are all part of the fun of school teams. Why should only the most talented athletes get to have this fun?

Getting cut from a team is an upsetting experience that no kid should have to suffer through. “I was cut from my school basketball team after working for more than two years to make it!” says Houston Bolin, 13, from Dallas, Texas. “A kid who is cut might not try out for other sports. He may be afraid of failing,” says Nate McKanna, 12, of Delphos, Ohio.

Everyone knows that only a few special athletes will be pros someday. But school sports are not professional. There should be plenty of room for kids who want to have fun and improve their skills as well as for the talented athletes who may go on to become pros.

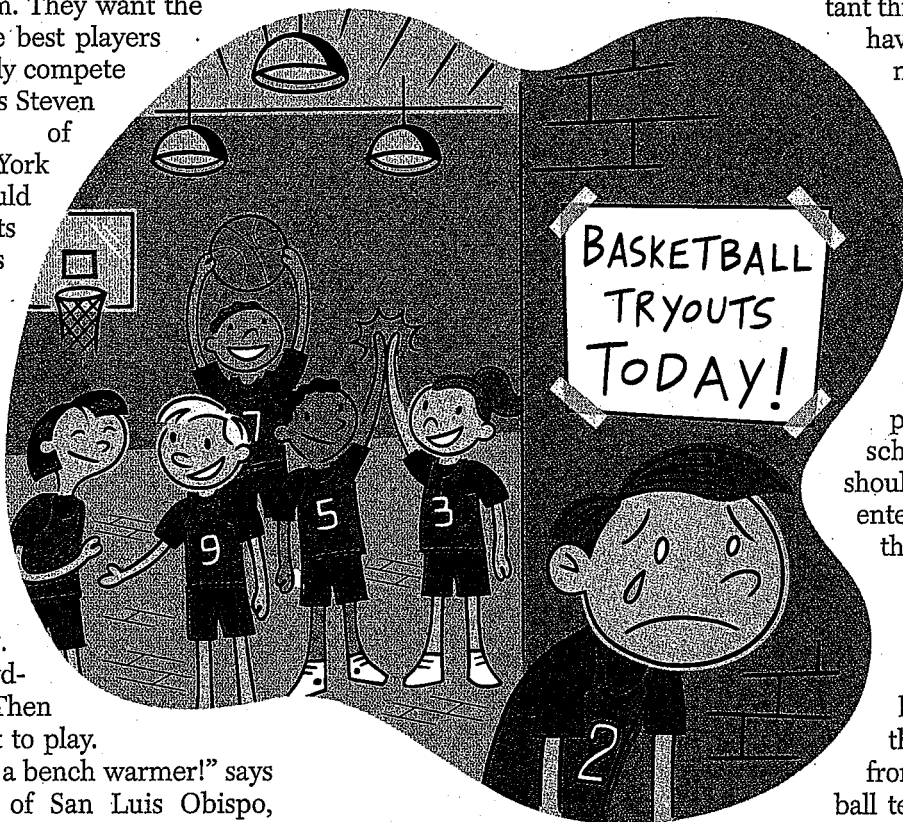


ILLUSTRATION BY DAVID BAMBUNDO





MARIE DORIGNY/REX/SABA

All work and no play: A boy stitches soccer balls in Pakistan.

## GOAL: ENDING CHILD LABOR

The campaign to stop the mistreatment of kids turns up the heat and gets results

Carefully guiding a needle that's longer than his tiny fingers, a young boy stitches together the leather pieces of a soccer ball. He sits crouched in the corner of a hot, airless shed for 12 hours. For his long day's work, he will earn 60 cents.

The boy is one of more than 200 million children who work at hard, sometimes dangerous jobs all over the world. Child labor exists in two-thirds of the world's nations. From Indonesia to Guatemala, poor children as young as 6 are sent off to work. Often they are mistreated and punished for not working hard enough. Sometimes they are sold as slaves.

In Pakistan, where 80% of the world's soccer balls are made, the situation is especially bad. There are 11 million to 12 million working children in that Asian country. At least half of them will die of starvation or disease before they reach their 12th birthday.

But a campaign to stop child-labor abuse has paid off. FIFA, the soccer world's governing organization, announced that, from now on, its seal of approval will guarantee the balls are made under proper working conditions. FIFA's decision, says U.S. Secretary of Labor Robert Reich, "is a major step in eliminating child labor from the soccer-ball industry."

### KIDS HELPING KIDS

Reich thanked the public for FIFA's decision. "You turned up the heat, and you got results," he said in a speech to the Child Labor Coalition, an organization that is trying to end the abuse of young workers. Reich also congratulated Craig Kielburger, 13, of Canada.

Craig has traveled the world fighting for kids' rights. "I don't play a lot of soccer," says Craig, "but I have many

friends who do. This change is important to them. It is just the beginning. But a strong beginning."

Craig believes kids can make a difference. He has this advice for them: "Write letters to companies and government officials. Put pressure on leaders to make changes and to stop the misuse of children."

### A U.S. PROBLEM TOO

The mistreatment of child workers is not just a foreign problem. Since colonial times, the U.S. has counted on children to lend a helping hand in its fields and factories. In the 1800s, children as young as 7 worked in textile mills for 12 hours a day.

In 1938 a federal law was passed that set child-labor guidelines, limiting work hours for kids and requiring safe conditions. But the law is sometimes ignored. For instance, close to 1 million kids in the U.S. work for farmers. From sunup to sundown, they harvest and haul. Other kids work near dangerous machinery or in other hazardous conditions.

One solution to the child-labor problem in poor countries is education. "The future of these countries," says Secretary Reich, "depends on a work force that is educated. We are prepared to help build schools."

Education is helping to make the world a brighter place for 12-year-old Aghan of India. When he was 9, Aghan was kidnapped from his home and sold to a carpet maker. Aghan's boss was very cruel. "I was always crying for my mother," he recalls. Aghan's dream was to learn to write so that he could send letters to his parents. Aghan was rescued from the factory by a group that opposes child labor. Now he is living in a shelter in New Delhi and is hard at work—learning to write.



# Should students still be taught cursive writing?

WITH PEOPLE RELYING on electronic forms of communication, such as e-mailing and texting, the need to learn the curves and loops of cursive handwriting may be waning.

Proponents of cursive writing say it is essential to daily life and to understanding history. It improves hand-eye coordination, and builds a variety of skills in youngsters. Critics argue that these days cursive writing is more of an art form than a necessary skill. It's too slow, they say, and it takes up teaching time that could be better spent on more important subjects.

What do you think?



Find out more about this topic on the Web:

[www.miller-mccune.com/culture-society/handwriting-is-history-6540/](http://www.miller-mccune.com/culture-society/handwriting-is-history-6540/)

[www.csmonitor.com/2007/1114/p13s01-legn.html](http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/1114/p13s01-legn.html)

[www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1912419,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1912419,00.html)

## YES

from members:

**Roy Lee Johnson**  
Eastpointe, MI



Even though we have computers, people should still know how to compose a letter and to write properly. Also, everyone needs their own signature for their name.

**Cynthia Pannor**  
Redondo Beach, CA



It is part of history and how we express our thoughts with some class and elegance.

Anyone can learn how to push a button, but not everyone can write beautifully.

**David A. McGrath**  
Islip, NY



It teaches children how to think about what they write. It improves the content of their writing, and corrects tense, punctuation and syntax.

## NO

from members:

**Samantha Rivera**  
Spanaway, WA



I learned it as a child but do not use it now. Everything we do now is on the computer.

All the reports and schoolwork as you get older has to be typed out.

**James B. Cannon**  
Buford, GA



I do not find it necessary at all. Cursive writing usually involves having to figure out the writer's slant. No pun intended.

**Pamela Sargeant-Laurence**  
Austin, TX



Kids today get more hand-to-eye from computers, phones and iPods. If texting were cursive it would have died an early death.

## from an expert in the field:



**Todd Misura** runs Maryland-based Write Here Right Now Inc. ([www.writehererightnow.com](http://www.writehererightnow.com)) and has spent more than 20 years working with children who struggle with one or more of the aspects of writing.

CURSIVE HANDWRITING INSTRUCTION continues to be a worthwhile endeavor in our schools. Research shows that children who form their letters more easily and automatically will score better on standardized tests than their less-skilled classmates. In the high-stakes environment of educational testing, legibility and speed do, in fact, matter. A child who writes slowly and with decreased legibility simply will not score as well as a child who writes quickly and with less effort.

With some exceptions, ACT and SAT college entrance examinations require handwritten responses. Handwriting must be legible, automatic and fast. Cursive is the answer.

Many reading specialists teach children cursive writing because they believe cursive mastery improves a child's ability to read and spell accurately. Their research indicates that cursive improves a child's ability to "chunk" letter sounds (for example "-ing"). The connected nature of cursive helps a child get an improved mental picture of these sound chunks. By learning these predictable letter groupings (or "chunks") within a word, as opposed to decoding each and every letter, a student can more quickly and easily decode (or read) the words.

Several related studies also contend that if a child can more easily recognize these chunks that make up words, there will be carryover to the child's ability to spell with improved accuracy. Here again, cursive is beneficial.

Modern cursive is not difficult to teach, nor does it require an inordinate amount of instruction time. In most schools, gone are the days of the Palmer method, in which children had to complete row after row of cursive using slanted swoops, loops and curlicues. The cursive style I teach can be taught in five- to 10-minute mini-lessons, has fewer loops and is much easier to learn than traditional cursive. I encourage children to come up with their own style once they have mastered the basic cursive strokes. In my experience, cursive teaches children how to write with less effort and increases their legibility and speed.

Cursive mastery benefits children by allowing them to keenly focus their energies upon the content of their writing and less upon the actual letter formation. I want every tool available when teaching children. ☞

## from an expert in the field:



**Melissa Shepard** is the principal of Sue Reynolds Elementary School in Augusta, Georgia (<http://reynolds.rcboe.org>).

CHILDREN USUALLY BEGIN to learn cursive writing in the third grade and it's taught for approximately nine to 12 weeks. Students also spend some time in fourth grade practicing cursive—approximately 30 minutes a week. However, one has to question the need for this.

Cursive writing is not required for most professions, and in our technology-driven world it is not a necessary skill. When I asked my teenage son whether he ever needed to use cursive writing, he took a break from texting and surfing YouTube to laugh and question my expertise as a principal. He informed me that he does not write in cursive, he has never been required to write in cursive and his computer will do it for him.

Some argue that cursive writing is needed to provide a signature, but even this isn't necessarily true anymore. I have filed federal and state documents online without signing them with a pen.

Cursive's proponents often argue that it strengthens neuron connections in the brain and builds visual, spatial and coordination skills. However, many other activities, such as physical education, do this too. In fact, some educators say the best way to strengthen neuron connections in the brain is to relate what students learn in the classroom to their previous personal experiences and to make real-world connections to new experiences.

Moreover, good handwriting has not been proven to be associated with intelligence, SAT scores, school success, career success, etc. If it were, then we would be in big trouble, because I have never met a doctor with good handwriting!

Modern education continues to stress the importance of teaching cursive writing because this is what is familiar to education. Education has a way of moving in circles, and it is difficult for some to move away from the circle due to comfort and familiarity.

We need to make the time for reading intervention. Approximately 21 million Americans cannot read, and 45 million are marginally illiterate. I believe the time currently spent on teaching cursive would be better used to hone reading skills. Could you tell a child there is no time to provide him with reading intervention because he has to practice his cursive writing? ☞

What do you think?  
**Should students still be taught cursive writing?**

YES  NO

Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

BUSINESS NAME \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_

**Four ways to vote:**



**1. Online:** Go to Costco.com, enter "debate" in the search box and find Debate in the magazine table of contents under "Departments."

**2. E-mail:** [debate@costco.com](mailto:debate@costco.com) (include mailing address and phone number in your e-mail message.)

**3. Fax:** (425) 313-6718

**4. Mail:** Debate  
The Costco Connection  
P.O. Box 34088  
Seattle, WA 98124-1088

**Results in the next issue**

**AUGUST DEBATE RESULTS:**  
**Is traffic photo enforcement a good idea?**



Percentage reflects votes received by August 13, 2010.

**JULY DEBATE RESULTS:**  
**Should it be harder to filibuster?**

**YES: 41% NO: 59%**

Percentage reflects votes received by July 31, 2010. Results may reflect Debate being picked up by blogs.

Opinions expressed are those of the individuals or organizations represented and are presented to foster discussion. Costco and The Costco Connection take no position on any Debate topic.