

## **Key Steps Before Students Write an Argumentative Essay**

In this Education Week article, Kate Ehrenfeld Gardoqui (Great Schools Partnership) worries that the Common Core-inspired emphasis on students making evidence-based arguments puts the cart before the horse: it gets students gathering evidence to support an assumption or a predetermined conclusion, feeding into what Gardoqui calls “an epidemic of our time” – selecting facts to support one perception of reality, rather than approaching a topic with an open mind. A better approach is to have students: - Delve into a relevant and important topic; - Gather data, read texts, conduct interviews, make observations; - Ask What do I see here? and What is this telling me? - Look for patterns in the information gathered; - Collaborate with others to analyze the information and test possible conclusions; - Only then formulate an argument with evidence, clarity, and eloquence.

“Students shine when they work this way,” says Gardoqui. They keep an open mind. They get to the heart of the matter. They solve problems. A thoughtful approach to argumentation is especially important in the contentious political environment of the U.S. today, she says: “If we are to survive as a nation, then our students must learn that the goal is not to win an argument. The goal is not to define reality according to the terms of one’s beliefs. The goal is to see what is around us and respond wisely...

The more that our classrooms are set up with this focus, the more hope there is that our students will come to regard themselves as American innovators working together to overcome challenges, partners in the face of a reality that we all perceive together, rather than as members of rival

factions trying to score points in an endless argument.” “Are We Making Students Argue Too Much?” by Kate Ehrenfeld Gardoqui in Education Week, October 3, 2018 (Vol. 38, #7, p. 20), <https://bit.ly/2QoDwHF> Back to page one