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Teaching argument : how prepared are middle school teachers to teach argument?

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ABSTRACT

TEACHING ARGUMENT: HOW PREPARED ARE MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS TO TEACH ARGUMENT?

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This study examines how prepared middle school teachers are to teach argument in the classroom. Specifically, the review focuses on what teachers report that they know about how to teach argument in their classroom, and how they are aligning argument instruction with Common Core State Standards. This study also focuses on what approaches teachers use to instruct argument writing, and what their instruction reveals about what they know about *principled practice*. A review of the literature highlights the work of Stephen Toulmin and the alignment of his conception of argument patterns with Common Core State Standards. It also focuses on studies in various disciplines that incorporate argument into the classroom.

The study relies on a mixed methods approach that examines data from surveys, interviews, and classroom observations. The findings of this study reveal that while most teachers report that they understand the concepts of argument and recognize that argument holds a "special place" in the Common Core State Standards, they lack the training to understand how to incorporate argument into their classroom. Additionally, teachers are not teaching argument in a way that aligns with Common Core State Standards, nor do they teach

argument in a way that aligns with practice supported by 50 years of research in the teaching of writing. This study offers several recommendations that may inform future studies, curriculum development, and instructional practices in teaching argument in the middle school classroom.

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TEACHING ARGUMENT: HOW PREPARED ARE MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS TO TEACH ARGUMENT?

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The adoption of Common Core State Standards (CCSS) across the United States introduced states to a rigorous set of standards. These standards, written from college and career readiness standards, scaffold throughout the K-12 curriculum. One of the more demanding aspects of the CCSS is the inclusion of argument across the standards in Math, English Language Arts, History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects. All subjects include standards for reading, writing, speaking and listening and within each of these strands, there is at least one of ten standards devoted to argument (Common Core State Standards, 2012). Two of the seven CCSS College and Career Readiness capacities, which are the goals that all students should be able to achieve for college and career readiness, highlight argument: "They comprehend as well as critique" and "They value evidence" (2012, p. 7). Under the influence of the Standards, argument is an important skill to include throughout the K-12 curriculum in all subjects.

Knowing that our current standards support teaching argument in the classroom, it is imperative for teachers to know how to teach argument to students. More specifically, it is middle school teachers who must understand the process of teaching argument. As Belland (2009) contends, skills obtained by students at the 8th grade level are the strongest predictor of college and career readiness. Students at this level also have a deeper understanding of the

content they are studying. Thus middle school is the ideal level to engage students in argument in all subjects in various formats such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening.

Conceptual Framework

This study draws on the work of Stephen E. Toulmin (1958) and his widely used argument model, the Toulmin model for informal reasoning. Toulmin is the basis for many argument models and has been influential in the area of teaching and understanding argument (Berland & Reiser, 2008; Felton & Herko, 2004; Hillocks, 2010; McCann, 1989; McNeill, 2011; Newell, Beach, Smith, & VanDerHeide, 2011; Prusak, Hershkowitz, & Schwarz, 2012; Reznitskaya, Anderson, & Kuo, 2007). As stated earlier, the CCSS suggest that argument should be taught explicitly and should represent an exemplary model for thinking, evaluating, and composing.

As the term is used in this study and in the CCSS documents, *argument* refers to logical thought and not to verbal combat, and it is not to be confused with *persuasion* as a distinct mode of writing. The CCSS suggest that *argument* pervades much academic work, representing how we evaluate the logical thought of others and advance our own logical thought. For any model of argument to be apprehended by middle level learners, the model should rely less on formal rules and emphasize instead the processes involved in assessing and generating logical reasoning. The model must be easy to understand and one that can be utilized with students at the middle school level. The Toulmin model is very straight forward and accessible to most middle school learners.

Toulmin advances a model of informal reasoning (i.e. *argument*) that has six components: *claim, data, warrant, backing, qualifier,* and *rebuttal*. The *claim* can be the answer to a question, the thesis statement, or an assertion depending on the type of argument. The *data* are the evidence or the information that one collects or researches in order to support or formulate a *claim*. *Warrants* validate how the *data* support the *claim*. They are common sense rules that one accepts as true; they can also be laws or scientific principles. An example of a *warrant* would be fingerprints. Most people understand that fingerprints are unique to each individual (Hillocks, 2011). The *backing* supports the *warrant*. As in the case of fingerprints utilized as a *warrant*, the *backing* would be the research conducted that proves the uniqueness of fingerprints. According to Hillocks (2011), most arguments are based on probability, therefore *qualifications* are necessary. Since *claims* and *warrants* cannot be absolutely true, qualifiers such as *probably* or *very likely* are typically used. Finally, the *qualification* or the *warrant* might give rise to the *rebuttal* (or counter-argument), based on the fact that the *claim* or *warrant* is a probability.

I also rely on the work of Nicole Boudreau Smith (2012) as part of the framework for the analysis of teachers' practices in the classroom. In Boudreau Smith's study, she reviewed 50 years of research in the teaching of writing to find points of convergence across different schools of thought about pedagogy and writing. As I discuss in greater detail below, these six points of convergence represent "*principled practice*," in the sense of instructional practices that are theoretically sound and supported by a substantial body of research. These principles served as part of the framework for observing in the classroom and for discussing teachers' approaches to teaching students to write arguments.

Problem Statement and Purpose

Schmoker (2006) contends that argument is the "heart of intellectual development" (p. 70). In his book *Results Now*, he highlights the importance of argument as a vital part of the K-12 curriculum. However, he explains that there is a lack of preparation for students in K-12 in the area of argument. Schmoker (2006) states that "K-12 education doesn't prepare them for this argumentative culture…on the contrary, students are trained to accept the world of experts at face value" (p.70).

Belland's (2009) study supports Schmoker's claim and advocates that argument be taught explicitly, and that teachers should use scaffolding to support student understanding about the argumentative process. Tippett (2009), as part of a meta-analysis, cites several studies conducted at the middle school level that argues that explicit instruction promotes the understanding of argument. Tippett also found that professional development was needed in order for teachers to teach argument strategically and to scaffold the learning process effectively throughout the curriculum. When this occurred, teachers were more able to adapt their classroom to include the use of argument.

As noted by both Belland (2009) and Tippett (2009), it is imperative for teachers to understand that argument is best taught explicitly by scaffolding the learning throughout the curriculum. Therefore, teachers must carefully plan and implement the teaching of argument if it is to be effective, especially in the area of writing. Smagorinsky (2002, 2009) contends that an approach to writing instruction must challenge teachers to think about their students' learning, diversity, and the culture of their school as well as materials available to them. His approach to writing instruction, principled practice, includes features from both inquiry-

based writing and the writer's workshop approach. Boudreau Smith (2012) developed a rubric for observing writing through the lens of principled practice. In her study she looked at 50 years of research to find commonalities that emerged across numerous studies. Boudreau Smith (2012) identifies six components that are the basis of the framework for the principled practice rubric. These components include methods for teaching writing explicitly as a process, as well as scaffolding writing instruction to align with specific tasks. The process of writing, while teacher-orchestrated, should be student-lead, making writing a social process. Teachers who attend to the implications of the research teach students processes or heuristics as opposed to templates or formulas, and foster reflection so that learners can transfer knowledge to other content areas (Boudreau Smith, 2012). Boudreau Smith contends that these components are essential to good writing instruction.

The knowledge that argument should be taught explicitly and scaffolded using a principled practice approach is vital as school districts across the United States rewrite curriculum to incorporate CCSS, which emphasize the standards pertaining to argument (Common Core State Standards, 2012). As these more rigorous and demanding standards are written into the curriculum, it is essential to know how prepared teachers are to teach them. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how prepared middle school teachers are to teach argument in the classroom. More specifically, this study aims to understand how much teachers at the middle school level know about the process of teaching argument as well as how they are interpreting the Common Core State Standards related to argument.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What do teachers report that they know about how to teach argument in their classroom?

2. How do middle school teachers' approaches to teaching argument align with the conception of argument envisioned by the Common Core State Standards?

3. How do middle school teachers' approaches to the teaching of writing argument reveal what they know about principled practices in the teaching of writing?

Significance of the Study

The results of this study can be used to reveal the need for professional development for teaching argument. In much of the literature reviewed for this study, researchers were going into teachers' classrooms and either coaching teachers on how to teach argument, or the researchers themselves went into classrooms and conducted workshops on argument with the students (Felton & Herko, 2004, Hillocks, 2010, McCann, 1989, Reznitskaya, et al., 2007). Professional development may help teachers teach argument more effectively. It may also encourage teachers and administrators to scaffold argument throughout their curriculum (Tippett, 2009). Additionally, the results of this study could assist teachers in understanding the components of argument and the impact argument can have in the classroom. Finally, results of this study might help teachers and administrators understand and implement CCSS more effectively into their curriculum. Understanding that teachers are not familiar with the

implementation of argument and working towards a more thorough understanding of what argument is and how it should be taught, is warranted if CCSS are to be implemented with fidelity and rigor.

Methodology

This study relied on an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. Participants included approximately 200 middle school teachers from Chicago area schools. Data collection occurred in two different phases. Phase one, quantitative data collection, included a survey designed by the researcher and distributed via email to participants. The survey was constructed using the Delphi Method and was analyzed using descriptive statistics. A total of 4 teachers were selected based on these results. The qualitative phase of the data collection includes interviews with the selected participants followed by observations of each teacher. Both interviews and observations were transcribed and then coded.

Organization of Study

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the conceptual framework, problem statement and purpose, research questions, significance of the study, and methodology. Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature on the topic of argument, what argument is, how argument is organized through the use of the Toulmin Model, and how argument is used in the Common Core State Standards. Chapter 3 focuses on the methods

utilized for this study. Chapter 4 provides the results of the research and a presentation of the data. Chapter 5 includes a discussion of findings, implications, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Kuhn and Dean (2004), to reach the highest level of metacognition, the *evaluativist* level, one must be able to use judgments, which require an individual to employ various supports that include argument and evidence. However, in order to evaluate judgments one must know how to gather evidence and create an effective argument. Today, across the nation, there is a push for children to be educated to reach this highest level of metacognition, and the means of getting children there is by immersing them in critical thinking skills (Schmoker & Graff, 2011). Common Core State Standards are devoted to immersing students in higher order thinking. Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are national standards that were adopted by 46 states across the nation as of January 2012 (Kober & Stark-Rentner, 2012). The CCSS offer rigorous standards in both English language arts and Mathematics. In both of these areas the ability to understand and execute arguments scaffolds throughout the K-12 levels.

Knowing that students need to understand and execute argument begs the essential question: What is argument? How will it benefit students in the classroom? And what are the effective approaches for teaching argument in the classroom? To fully understand what argument is and how to teach the students to actively engage in arguments, one must search to define an operational definition of *argument* in the academic setting. Therefore the

purpose of this literature review is to elucidate argument and how it relates to learning in the classroom. Consequently, this review of the literature about argument will explain what argument is, describe key components of arguments, and reveal how argument pervades the curriculum.

Understanding Argument

The ability to engage in argument as it relates to reasoning has many different definitions but all have similar elements. Felton and Kuhn (2001) describe argument "as a social activity in which two or more people advance, defend, and compare arguments in support of opposing positions (p. 135)." Berland and Reiser (2008) explain argument as "a competitive interaction in which participants present claims, defend their own claims and rebut the claims of their opponents until one participant (or side) 'wins' and the other 'loses'"(p. 27). Argument is defined by Asterhan and Baruch (2009) as "an activity in which interlocutors attempt to decrease or increase the acceptability of one or more ideas by reasoning" (p. 375). Taken together, these definitions highlight the idea that argument is a social process involving two or more people who engage in a debate in which they defend their claims using reasoning to support their views (Kuhn & Udell, 2003). All descriptions of argument fall under the umbrella of argumentative theory which posits that "reasoning evolved mostly to serve argumentative purposes" (Mercier, 2011, p. 179).

While many of these conceptions of argument emphasize debate and competition, the CCSS, Graff and Birkenstein (2010), Williams and McEnerny of the University of Chicago Writing Program, and Hillocks (2010), see argument as logical thinking, a tool for inquiry

that leads to deep understanding, rather than a means for determining winners and losers. For the purposes of the current study, I discuss argument in this more affirmative sense that emphasize deliberation rather than debate, collaborative understanding rather than competition.

In this review of the literature on argument, I explain several argument models. However, a comprehensive review of the *Toulmin model* reveals it as the basis for many argument conceptions reported in the literature (Berland & Reiser, 2008; Felton & Herko, 2004; Hillocks, 2010; McCann, 1989; McNeill, 2011; Newell, et al., 2011; Prusak, et al., 2012; Reznitskaya, et al., 2007). Also, as the related literature reveals, the Toulmin model seems to be the most useful in teaching students to write in a logical way.

Components of Argument and the *Toulmin Model*

According to much of the literature reviewed, many argument models are based on the *Toulmin Model* of argument grounded in the theories and schema developed by Stephen E. Toulmin (Berland & Reiser, 2008; Felton & Herko, 2004; Hillocks, 2010; McCann, 1989; McNeill, 2011; Newell et al., 2011; Prusak et al., 2011; Reznitskaya et al., 2007). Toulmin compares the makeup of an argument to that of an organism: "It has both a gross, anatomical structure and a finer, as-it-were physiological one" (Toulmin, 1958, p.57). Toulmin's model is explained in his widely recognized book *The Uses of Argument* (Figure 1). Toulmin describes argument as having specific components: *claim, data, warrant, backing, qualifier* and *rebuttal*. The *claim* is the assertion, generalization, or the answer to the question. *Data (or evidence)* are the information or examples that support the claim. The *warrant* justifies

how the data support the claim and *backing* supports the warrants. *Qualifications* are statements of the conditions under which the claim will be true. *Rebuttals* (counter-arguments) refute the competing claims (Toulmin, 1958). There are many variations of this model found in the literature; however most of these elements are the basics for the different models (Erduran, Simon, & Osbourne, 2004; Hillocks, 2010; Prusak et al., 2011; Tippett, 2009).

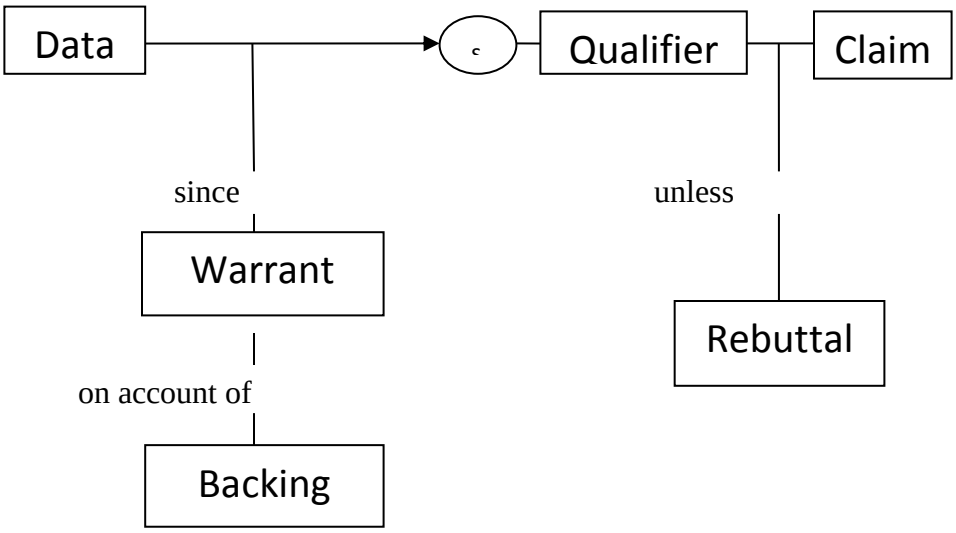

Figure 1: Toulmin's argument pattern (Toulmin, 1958).

While some researchers have concluded that the use of the *Toulmin model* can be difficult due to the ambiguity associated with what counts as claim, data, warrant, and backing (Erduran et al., 2004), the model shown in Figure 1 uses words that help explain the relation. Using an example from Toulmin's (1958) book and the above figure to explain how the *Toulmin model* works, we will use the *claim*, "Harry is a British Subject." The *data* or the fact to support this claim is that "Harry was born in Bermuda and since a man born in Bermuda will generally be a British subject (*warrant*) so presumably (*qualifier*) Harry is a

British subject." The backing to support the warrant in this case is on account of "the terms and the dates of enactment of the Acts of Parliament and other legal provisions governing the nationality of persons born in the British colonies" (Toulmin, 1958, p. 97). This argument may still be *rebutted* dependent on the qualifier or the warrant that shows how the data demonstrate how one is a *subject*; we presume Harry is a British subject unless both his parents were born in another country or he has become a naturalized citizen in another country (*rebuttal*). The *qualifier*, while presumably supporting the claim, can lead to certain conditions that can lead to a *rebuttal*.

While most researchers utilize the Toulmin Argument Pattern (TAP) model as the basis of their argument scheme Erduran et al. (2004) use the TAP model for evaluation purposes in their study of science discourse. They use the TAP model as a tool for evaluating the quantity and quality of student's argument skills. Their research occurred over the course of two years in 12 different classes in three schools. Students were in grade 8, with an age range of 12-14. Teachers were trained in how to teach argument using TAP, and given a set of 9 different lessons which were utilized in both years.

The authors recorded the results first by the occurrence or quantity of TAP by recoding the features of TAP used in different combinations. To explain, CD represents claim and data, CDW is claim, data, warrant, CDR is claim, data, rebuttal, CWR is claim, warrant, rebuttal, CDWB is claim, data, warrant, backing and finally CDWR is claim, data, warrant and rebuttal, this being the highest level of argument in this scheme pattern. Researchers recorded these patterns after reviewing data from students' argument skills over a two-year period.

Also included in the results of this research was the quality of arguments produced by the students. The authors developed a framework based on five different levels going from a simple claim versus a claim or counter claim (Level 1), to an argument displaying an extended argument with more than one rebuttal (Level 5). The authors were able to record their results using these two different schemes based on the TAP model, and were able to identify several themes in the data. They contend that these results can serve as a means for tracing improvements in argument over time.

While most of the research on argument utilizes the Toulmin model or variations of it, there are other models of argumentation found in the literature. Tippett (2009) cites Walton's framework as an alternative to Toulmin's, but explains that researchers tend to select only portions of Walton's model. Walton's model is based on presumptive reasoning, and contains 25 categories of argument. The basis of this model focuses on evidence and premises. It is a more sophisticated and detailed model for argument and is used more for those in the area of law (Gordon, Prakken, & Walton, 2007).

Another model for argument is the Carneades model, which utilizes several argumentation tasks such as argument reconstruction, evaluation, and visualization. The Carneades model is founded on Walton's theory of argument schemes, and is another model that is very sophisticated, not suitable for teaching argument at the K-12 level. This model is also mainly used for modeling legal dialogues (Gordon, et al., 2007).

Despite a number of different kinds of models of argument, many researchers used the Toulmin Model as the basis for their teaching of argument in their studies and in

reporting results. The following section will further explain how reasoning skills are developed during the process of argument.

Argument: The Core of Critical Thinking

The most widely and internationally used curricula in critical thinking is known as Thinking Skills offered by the University of Cambridge International Examination (CIE) which is the largest provider in the world of international qualifications for 14 to19-year-olds (Lim, 2011). The CIE provides curriculum as well as leveled examinations that will qualify students' entry into the next step in their academic pursuits (Levels are from 5-19). The curriculum is comprised of two components, problem solving and critical thinking. At the heart of the critical thinking component is analysis, evaluation, and construction of argument (Lim, 2011). There are 20 objectives that comprise this curriculum and the majority of them are concerned with argument analysis and logic skills.

With many theorists and educators emphasizing critical thinking as a goal to achieving academic success, it is imperative to understand how to obtain these skills. According to the Thinking Skills curriculum, argumentation utilizes critical thinking (Lim, 2011).

George Hillocks Jr. (2010) believes, consistent with the University of Cambridge International Examination, that "argument is at the heart of critical thinking and academic discourse, the kind of writing that students need to know for success in college (p. 25). Hillocks (2010) has worked with many students at the college and high school level to teach them how to read and write arguments. In one sequence, he starts teaching students at a very

basic level by introducing them to a murder mystery in which they are given the very basic facts of a murder. The students then must apply reasoning skills and background knowledge to solve the mystery. Hillocks works with the students and helps them construct a claim, which they support with solid evidence and warrants and backing to provide support for the evidence. He claims that even the most academically challenged students can be successful at argument if given sufficient and appropriate explicit instruction (Hillocks, 2010).

According to Berland and Reiser (2008), in the formulation of an argument students need to be able to construct and defend explanations. To be able to do this, students must make sense of the phenomena they are investigating, which requires a deep level of understanding of the content. Students must then be able to articulate their understanding of what or why something occurred. Finally, a learner relies on logical appeals to convince an audience about the merits of an explanation of the phenomenon being studied. Once this process has been completed, students should have developed a shared understanding of the phenomenon (Berland & Reiser, 2008). In this process of the construction of explanations the learner attempts persuasion, the form of appeals to reason, as one component to support and present the explanation, which in turn supports the argument.

Overall, reasoning is applied throughout the entire process of an argument. As stated earlier, according to the argument theory, reasoning evolved mostly for argumentative purposes; therefore, argument can be thought of as the main function of reasoning (Mercier, 2011). The psychology of reason is dominated by dual process theories, which have been vague in their interpretations. However, Mercier (2011) explains the two processes as *intuitive* and *reflective inferences*. An inference is a "psychological process that takes an

input, processes it, and delivers an enriched output" (Mercier, 2011, p. 178). In an intuitive inference there is no attention paid as to the reasons why an inference is made. An example of this would be when you go to the store and see people with carts standing in line, you infer that this is where you checkout; it is a spontaneous inference. You are not aware of the reasons that justified your actions other than your general knowledge. By contrast, a thinker ponders reasons when reaching a conclusion in a reflective inference. You are in line and see that the person's cart in front of you is full. You look over to the line next to you and notice that that person has only a few items, and you go over to the other line. Your decision to go to another line was based on a reflection on reasons, such as "the cart is full and will take much longer than the cart in the next line." In order to formulate reasoning that is used for argument, reflective inferences are used. Thus, reasoning will help students make their initial claims about an argument, form explanations, provide further proof, and assist in counter-arguments.

Problem-solving skills are initially employed when constructing the argument. An argument starts with an area of doubt, hence a problem to solve, and one must be able to formulate the claim questioning regard to the problem. Once the claim is composed, data or evidence supporting the claim is gathered from various sources. Reasoning skills are applied throughout the entire process of argument, a reflective type of reasoning. One needs a thorough understanding of the argument and the material being investigated in order to defend the evidence composed for the claim (Mercier, 2011).

Teaching Argument

Due to the deep level of understanding of the phenomena being argued, many students have difficulty learning how to engage in argument (Reznitskaya et al., 2007). If they have not comprehended the material it will be hard to gather evidence and defend it. Much of the research suggests scaffolding the process of argument throughout the year. They also recommend scaffolding using tools such as a web-based organization tool, to assist students in organizing their argument (Belland, 2009; Berland & Reiser, 2008; Felton & Herko, 2004; Newell et al., 2011). Other studies suggest that explicit instruction should be utilized to help students effectively engage in argument (Erduran et al., 2004; McNeill, 2011; Tippett, 2009). This suggestion infers that the teacher's role in students' learning about argument is vital.

The primary role of the teacher is "to provide support for the development of argumentative skills" (Reznitskaya et al., 2007, p.454). The level of teacher involvement will depend upon the social and cognitive knowledge that students have in argument. In order for students to generate strong arguments on their own, Hillocks (2010) recommends that teachers involve students in a highly engaging activity; it should be simple yet challenging. One activity that he used with a group of 30 high school students introduces them to forensic argument, defined after Aristotle as an argument about a proposition of fact, or about what happened. On the first day he distributes a picture of a crime scene and tells the students that they are going to be crime scene investigators and determine what happened at the crime scene. He then reads them an account of what happened at the crime scene and the students compare the picture to the crime report. Then he discusses their analysis

verbally and writes their claims and evidence on an overhead. Hillocks then uses their thinking as a chance to explain the elements of argument. With plenty of supports, students are then able to write their argument to prove their claim about what they think happened during the crime. Hillocks explains that the whole process takes four days of instruction (Hillocks, 2010).

Argument is a valuable skill to learn in order for students to engage in higher order thinking skills such as critical thinking and reasoning. In order for students to properly learn how to argue, it is vital that the learners engage in the processes of argument by grappling with problems through a deliberative process with their peers. The following sections will explain how Common Core State Standards require students to learn argument in virtually every subject in school. Also included is research that shows how teachers and researchers have utilized argument in various learning situations and subject areas.

Argument in the Common Core State Standards

To understand the value of teaching argument using the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as a guideline, one must complete an in-depth analysis of the standards. In order to understand how the CCSS defines argument, a definition is explained in Appendix A of the CCSS. Justification for teaching argument is also provided in this appendix. The Common Core State Standards also provides a detailed description of how to teach argument at every grade level in each content area.

To truly understand how to teach argument according to CCSS, one must understand the conceptual framework on which it is designed. One must also clarify how traditional

methods of teaching argument, such as persuasion, differ from the CCSS' interpretation of teaching argument. The following sections will provide an analysis of the Common Core State Standards relating to argument. Also explained is how the CCSS on argument are influenced by the Toulmin model, and how this differs from traditional persuasive forms of writing. The types of knowledge that middle school students need to acquire in order to fully benefit from the knowledge to be gained by engaging in argument will also be clarified.

Justifying the Teaching of Argument in the CCSS

The Common Core State Standards highlight standards pertaining to argument. In the content area of writing, particular attention is focused on writing argument. Appendix A (Common Core State Standards, 2010) of the CCSS, in the section on writing, defines the three text types that students must be able to write: Argument, informational/explanatory writing, and narrative writing, with a definition for each. The CCSS define an argument as "…a reasoned, logical way of demonstrating that the writer's position, belief, or conclusion is valid" (Common Core State Standards, Appendix A, 2010, p. 24). It further explains how students argue in each subject area: English Language Arts, History/Social Studies, and Science. In the definition it explains that for grades K-5, "opinion" is used instead of the word "argument," as students at this level are just developing this skill.

The CCSS Appendix A acknowledges "The Special Place of Argument in the Standards" (Common Core State Standards, Appendix A, 2010, p. 24). This section highlights the importance of the ability for students to write "sound arguments on substantive topics and issues, as this ability is critical to college and career readiness" (Common Core

State Standards, Appendix A, 2010, p. 24). The authors of the CCSS document cite, Joseph M. Williams and Lawrence McEnerney of the University of Chicago Writing Program, to support further the value of argument in college and career readiness. The document's authors provide a definition of argument that helps to clarify how argument is defined by the CCSS: "Williams and McEnerney define argument not as 'wrangling' but as 'a serious and focused conversation among people who are intensely interested in getting to the bottom of things cooperatively" (Common Core State Standards, Appendix A, 2010, p. 24). The appendix goes on to quote directly from Williams and McEnerney's University of Chicago Writing Program handbook. The quote, taken directly from the handbook, is directed at their college students and summarizes the type of writing (argument) they will be utilizing not only as a student at the university, but in any profession they may pursue. The quote ends by surmising that "In an Age of Information, what most professionals do is research, think, and make arguments" (Common Core State Standards, Appendix A, 2010, p. 24).

The document provides further evidence of the value of writing argument in postsecondary education by citing several universities that support it as a key component of instruction, such as universities in Virginia, Florida, and California. It also highlights notable researchers in the field of academics such as Gerald Graff, author of *Clueless in Academe*, and theorist and critic Neil Postman, both of whom support the importance of argument in education. This section concludes by quoting Richard Fulkerson from his book *Teaching the Argument in Writing*, who claims that the goal of argument "is not victory but a good decision, one in which all arguers are at risk of needing to alter their views, one in which a participant takes seriously and fairly the views different from his or her own" (Common Core

State Standards, Appendix A, 2010, p. 25). By the conclusion of this section, the reader should not only have a good understanding of what is meant by argument, but should also be convinced of the value of teaching argument in the K-12 classroom.

In the CCSS, Appendix A provides educators with an understanding of how argument is interpreted by CCSS as well as providing justification for the importance of argument in the K-12 curriculum. Once a clear definition of argument is understood one must also clarify how CCSS view of argument is different from what may have been previously taught. The following section will explain how the CCSS related to argument, align with the language and the ideas of the Toulmin model. Further, this section will explain how argument in the CCSS is different from the more traditional persuasive types of writing.

Alignment of Toulmin's Model with CCSS

The CCSS for argument appear to have been influenced by the Toulmin model. The framers of the document use words like "claim" and "evidence" that are synonymous with the Toulmin model. They also cite Graff, Williams and McEnerney, and Fulkerson, all of whom are influenced by Toulmin. Many other researchers and practitioners have been influenced by the Toulmin model of argument, making it one of the most widely recognized models for teaching argument (Berland & Reiser, 2008; Felton & Herko, 2004; Hillocks, 2011; McCann, 1989; McNeill, 2011; Newell et al., 2011; Prusak et al., 2012; Smagorinsky, Johannessen, Kahn, & McCann, 2011; Reznitskaya et al., 2007; Smith, 1984; Smith, Wilhelm, & Fredricksen, 2012, 2013). Smith et al. (2012) posit that the reason Toulmin's model is a popular model to use when teaching argument is, "Toulmin's analysis of everyday

arguments has been especially compelling to us because it is so well suited to capitalize on student's oral abilities" (p. 12). Hillocks (2011) explains that it was the work of Stephan Toulmin that helped him fill in several gaps in his understanding of his theory of argument. Smith (1984) clarifies that Toulmin's model includes all of the elements that go into an effective argument, and it is one that can be adapted easily for teaching writing. He explains that in order for students to be able to write an effective argument, they must first understand the essential elements of argument, which is the Toulmin model.

In the CCSS there are ten College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for reading, these anchor standards are what every student is expected to understand in order to achieve college and career readiness. The number of the anchor standard correlates to the same number for each grade level standard in reading. For example, reading anchor standard eight correlates to reading standard eight for grade 6, which has been scaffolded for that grade level. Reading anchor standard eight states: "Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific *claims* in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the *evidence*" (Common Core State Standards, 2010, p. 35). In the reading of informational texts in language arts, science, and history/social studies, students need to understand the *claim*, recognize the *evidence*, and judge the relevance and significance of the evidence based on the *warrant*. All three are the basic elements of the Toulmin model previously described.

The College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing also have ten standards, but it is standard one that relates to argument. Standards one states: "Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid

reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence" (Common Core State Standards, 2010, p. 41). Once again, the same three elements from Toulmin's model are evident; understanding the *claim*, recognizing the *evidence*, and judging the relevance and significance of the evidence based on the *warrant*.

When looking at writing standards by grade level, standard one has five sub-levels relating to the standard. These sub-levels get progressively more challenging as the grade level increases. In sixth grade CCSS expect students to:

1. Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
    a. Introduce claim(s) and organize the reasons and evidence clearly.
    b. Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
    c. Use words, phases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among claim(s) and reasons.
    d. Establish and maintain a formal style.
    e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from the argument presented. (Common Core State Standards, 2010, p. 42)

Standards in eighth grade are similar but are more rigorous than the sixth grade standards:

1. Write argument to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
    a. Introduce claim(s), acknowledge and distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and organize the reasons and evidence logically.
    b. Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.
    c. Use words, phrases and clauses to create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons and evidence
    d. Establish and maintain a formal style.
    e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the argument presented. (Common Core State Standards, 2010, p. 42)

The basic elements from Toulmin's model are evident: understanding the *claim*, recognizing the *evidence*, and judging the relevance and significance of the evidence based on the *warrant*, and in eighth grade counterclaims are added, as they are more challenging to understand and create. In eighth grade, standard 1c, students are required to "create cohesion and clarify the relationships among claim(s), counter-claims, reasons and evidence" (Common Core State Standards, 2010, p. 42). This clarification aligns with Toulmin's conception of the *backing* as the evidentiary support for warrants and *qualifiers*, the recognized limitations for any claim or generalization.

Smith et al. (2012) posit that while it is clear that CCSS expect students to write a well-supported and organized argument "that establish clear and significant claims… the CCSS don't specify what they mean by 'significant' claims, nor what they mean by supporting an argument effectively" (p. 12). This is where the Toulmin model fits, to clarify what is meant by "significant claims and supporting an argument effectively." To further clarify how Toulmin's model works well with the CCSS I will provide you with an example from Smith et al. (2012).

Smith et al. (2012) suggest that one begins argument instruction by starting with a conversation that will generate a controversial claim such as "Who is the best actor?" Perhaps a student answers, "Johnny Depp is the best actor of his generation," which represents a *claim*. In order to generate evidence or the data for this claim, the teacher asks, "What makes you say so?" The student replies, "Johnny Depp has played many different roles in his career such as the pirate Jack Sparrow, the unfortunate loner Edward

Scissorhands, and the loyal sidekick Tonto." Now that the student has provided *evidence* why Johnny Depp is the best actor, the teacher needs to help the student establish the *warrant.* This is achieved by asking "So what" or "Why does those data matter?" The student answers the "So what" question with, "Versatility is the key ingredient of great actors" (Smith et al., 2012). This statement helps to connect the claim "Johnny Depp is the best actor of his generation" to the data, "Johnny Depp has played many different roles in his career such as the pirate Jack Sparrow, the unfortunate loner Edward Scissorhands, and the loyal sidekick Tonto." In other words, great actors are those who can play many versatile roles, since Johnny Depp has played many versatile roles, as the data proves, then he is a great actor. Still someone can disagree with this reasoning and challenge the *warrant* by saying, "Unless he doesn't do a very good job playing those roles." The student would then have to *counter-argue*, and might say, "But Johnny Depp has won many awards playing the various roles." Smith et al. (2012) call this answer a response, which is an alternative to Toulmin's *qualifier*. Figure 2 presents a visual representation of the argument using the Toulmin model.

Toulmin's model aligns well with CCSS and can be easily adapted to teaching argument. However, the CCSS only tells teachers what to teach, not how to teach the standards. The Toulmin model bridges this gap in the standards, providing a suitable model that contains similar elements as those in the CCSS. Smith et al. (2012) go even further with the model and explain how to teach argument using the Toulmin model, explaining how this instruction aligns with CCSS.

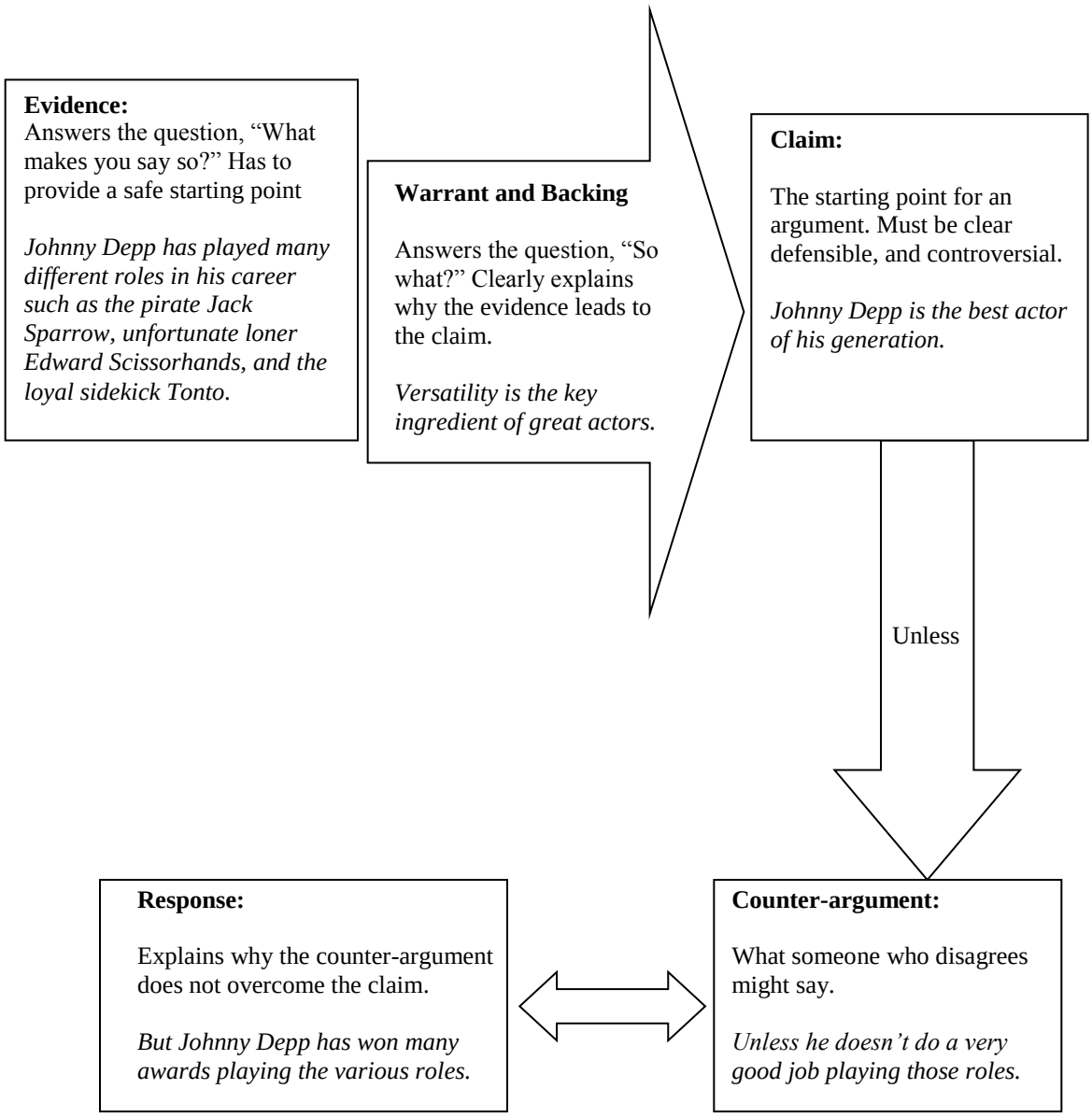

Figure 2: A graphic representation of Toulmin's model (Source: Smith et al., 2012).

How Argument in the CCSS Differs from Persuasion

Thus far, I have explained how CCSS defines and justifies argument as well as explaining how the Toulmin model aligns with the CCSS' definition of argument. In this section I will explain how argument is different from persuasion. There is a difference because argument is often confused as being synonymous with persuasion; McCann (2010) notes that argument is a common tool for persuasion, but the two terms are not synonymous. Hillocks (2011) explains that in persuasion "Your single purpose is to be convincing…In a persuasive essay, you can select the most favorable evidence, appeal to emotions, and use style to persuade your readers" (p. xvii). Smith et al. (2012) explain that "…persuasion seeks to change a point of view by any means necessary" (p. 17), which can lead to persuasion through propaganda. However, they believe that when students understand argument, they will have the ability to recognize propaganda.

Before the implementation of CCSS, each state had their own set of standards. In the area of writing, most states required students to write persuasive essays (Hillocks, 2005). Hillocks (2005) explains that criteria for evaluating persuasive essays, such as rubrics used in the classroom and to evaluate essays for states tests, were general and evasive. He posits that most states required persuasive essays to elaborate and support, but the rubrics did not clarify what counted as acceptable support. Hillocks (2005) looked at benchmark papers in both Texas and Illinois and concluded that neither state required any evidence to be included in the essays, including the highest-level essay (such as "exceeds state standards"). In a detailed analysis of what Texas refers to as "fully elaborated" their highest level of expectation for an essay, Hillocks (2005) finds flaws with their scoring. The "fully

elaborated" essay is not supported with evidence but with claims and sub-claims. He uses the Toulmin model to assess the essay and finds that the major claim is supported by five sub-claims, which are all unsupported with the exception of one that is followed by what he says is "evidence of a sort" (p. 246). Hillocks (2005) explains that "The example tells Texas teachers that any sort of elaboration will do" (p. 246). He finds similar results in several states that use comparable prompts and rubrics, Illinois is among one of the states he names. The Illinois Writing Assessment Framework for Grades 3, 5, 6, and 8/State Assessments beginning Spring 2007, are the most recent standards in writing for the state of Illinois. Standard 3B and 3C discuss the standards for persuasive compositions. The standard for persuasive composition in grades 6-8 states that students should "Write a persuasive composition by taking a position on a topic and developing one side of the argument" (Illinois State Board of Education, August, 2013, p. 12). The standard is further divided into Focus, Support, Organization and Clarity, with several benchmarks for each:

> **Persuasive (Focus) -** The clarity with which a composition presents and maintains a clear main idea or point [of] view
>
> **Persuasive (Support)** – The degree to which the main point or position is supported and explained by specific details and reasons
>
> **Persuasive (Organization)** – The clarity of the logical flow of ideas and the explicitness of the text structure or plan (coherence and cohesion)
>
> **Persuasive (Integration)** – Evaluation of the composition based on a focused, global judgment of how effectively the composition as a whole fulfills the assignment (Illinois State Board of Education, August, 2013, p. 12)

As evidenced from the above standards in persuasive composition, the Illinois State Standards are emphasizing *persuasive* writing and not *argument* writing as written in the

CCSS. The Illinois State Standards expect students to choose a position about a recommended course of action, and to support their position with details and reasons, not evidence and warrants as is typical in argument writing. The Illinois State Standards also proclaim that students are to take a position and develop one side of the argument, unlike argument where counter-arguments are encouraged in order to make the argument stronger.

As schools begin to implement CCSS, it is important for teachers to understand how argument is different than persuasion. In the state of Illinois, as in many other states, previous standards have implemented persuasive writing not argument. This is essential to understand as schools are still using the Illinois State Standards, unless they have fully implemented CCSS, which was officially mandated for the 2013/14 school year (Illinois State Board of Education, August 2015). State rubrics and exemplars have been proven to be evasive and confusing in interpreting expectations for persuasive writing. Previous standards have also focused more on form rather than substance, and have utilized knowledge that informs what to do rather than how to perform a certain task. The section that follows explains how classrooms have utilized argument into various subject areas.

Studies Supporting Argument by Subject Area

Understanding what argument is and how it is different from what has been traditionally taught is important to know in the implementation of CCSS. Additionally, it is essential to understand what knowledge is gained from engaging in argument. This understanding is vital, as argument is a major strand in the CCSS in most content areas in the middle school classroom. According to the CCSS, it is in middle school (beginning in sixth

grade) when students are first expected to engage in argument. Therefore, the transfer of the knowledge of argument is valuable throughout the middle school classroom. However, while the components and understanding of argument are consistent, the way each content area uses argument varies. This section will explain the expectations of CCSS for argument in the areas of English language arts, history/social studies, and science in the middle school classroom. Additionally, I have highlighted various studies conducted using argument in the classroom, these are separated by subject area as well.

Most of the major studies reviewed used argument in several subjects. In most of the research, argument was taught as students engaged through social interaction to make claims, find evidence, and argue a position. Most of these learning situations were highly engaging and motivating for students. I begin with argument in the English language arts classroom as this can apply to any subject area across the curriculum, both the core subjects as well as elective courses. Reading and writing arguments, essentially, will help to form the basis for understanding the entire process of argument (Felton & Herko, 2004; Hillocks, 2010).

Argument in the English Language Arts Classroom

According to CCSS, in the area of English language arts, the use of argument is evident when reading informational text, writing, and speaking and listening. Appendix A of the CCSS document, explains that "In English language arts, students make claims about the worth or meaning of a literary work or works. They defend their interpretations or judgments with evidence from the text(s) they are writing about" (Common Core State Standards, Appendix A, 2010, p. 23). It is in the language arts classroom where students should receive

a foundation for argument, as the strand for both reading and writing are more detailed and have more depth than the reading strands in argument for history/social studies and science. Also, within the English language arts standards are the speaking and listening standards that additionally include two strands that relate to argument, stating how students should be prepared to engage in discussions pertaining to argument.

Hillocks (2010) claims that in order for students to be successful in college students need to know how to formulate good arguments. But in order to frame and defend an argument one must know how to read with the ultimate intent of composing an argument, and for gathering evidence to support the developed argument. Writing the argument can be even more challenging than reading it but is necessary for successful argument skills (Hillocks, 2010; McCann, 1989; Newell et. al., 2011; Reznitskaya et. al., 2007).

As one study revealed, students have more difficulty writing argumentative discourse than they do other types of writing such as narrative or exposition (McCann, 1989). The author conducted his study on students at grades 6, 9, and 12 to determine the students' knowledge of argument and their ability to produce it. First, students were asked to read seven different reading passages and determine if each passage was an argument, and if so to rate its quality on a scale of 1 to 5. Students then were asked to write a response to a prompt that required students to write an argument to support a position about a policy question.

The results of this study revealed that students at grades 6, 9, and 12 are able to recognize various aspects of argument in a way that was similar to the judgments of adult experts. All students were able to identify the three of the seven texts that had the strongest arguments. The students, even at sixth grade, ranked the reading passages according to their

quality as arguments, in the same way that a group of adult experts ranked the passages. The results from the written arguments revealed that students at all three grade levels were able to make claims and state propositions. However, the students in sixth grade were not as effective at stating claims and using warrants to explain their data. Again, what is central to this study is the point that students as young as 6th grade are already familiar with elements of argument (McCann, 1989), suggesting that they were ready to learn about argument.

Reznitskaya, et al., (2007) further consider the notion that young students already have some knowledge of argument. In their study they look at two different instructional practices and their effects on transfer performance. In order to evaluate students' acquisition of argumentative knowledge, three different treatments were used. In one group students employed collaborative reasoning when reading and discussing text in class. A second group employed collaborative reasoning but with explicit instruction in argument. The third group received their regular reading instruction. Students in each group responded to interview questions, wrote a reflective essay and recalled an argumentative text.

Results from the study suggest that students who were in the two treatment groups that employed collaborative reasoning responded better to the interview questions posed and showed a better understanding of argument functions and criteria. The students who experienced both collaborative reasoning and explicit instruction displayed better knowledge of argument principles but did not do better than students in the other two treatments on their reflective essays or text recalls (Reznitskaya, et al., 2007).

Felton and Herko (2004), support the belief that young children can produce the basic elements of argument. They contend that by age 9, children can produce claims and support

them with evidence, and can also counter-argue claims that are in opposition to their own in a supportive, familiar, and motivating setting. The authors believe that students' difficulty with argument is putting their spoken words in an argument into a written format. They state that students must begin by engaging in an inner dialogue that has two sides at the very least. The basis for their research is putting the spoken word into written dialogue for purposes of writing a persuasive argument.

Felton and Herko (2004) conducted a workshop on argumentative writing in an urban setting with 36 high school students in an 11th grade humanities class. The students were racially and ethnically diverse with varying levels of writing abilities and achievement skills. They began the workshop with a basic structure of argument utilizing Toulmin's model. The researchers simplified Toulmin's terminology by developing the acronym "PREP: a *position* on a topic, one or more *reasons* to support that position, *explanation* for those reasons, and *proof* to support the reasons and the explanation" (Felton & Herko, p. 676). The authors stated that it is important to select a topic that is familiar to the students, so that they better understand the process of engaging in argument.

Another aspect of teaching argument writing that the authors believe to be valuable is prewriting and revision activities. In the workshop, students engaged in several prewriting and revision activities. First, they used a graphic organizer developed by the authors to organize their positions as well as other perspectives on the issue, in order to understand competing sides of the argument. Next, they engaged in an oral debate with a partner, so that one could take notes on critiques to their position. They were then asked to use the notes

from the debate and work with their partner to complete a rough draft of their essay. After this final revision, students were assigned to write their own final draft for homework.

Felton and Herko (2004) believe that adolescents' persuasive essays are deficient in the basic elements of argumentative writing; they believe that this can be solved by engaging in verbal arguments and putting the spoken word into writing. They also claim that teachers need to change their practices and incorporate argument into the contexts of the curriculum so that it is a natural part of the discourse of the classroom.

Newell et al., (2011) review research on teaching and learning argument in reading and writing. The researchers discuss argument in reading and writing by considering cognitive and social perspectives. They explain that researchers and teachers need to understand both of these perspectives, and how they affect knowledge and transfer in the learning and instruction of argument.

The authors begin their review by discussing some of the challenges in teaching argument in reading and writing. In teaching argument, one of the major challenges is "that students have difficulty mastering advanced reading comprehension and critical literacy skills in core disciplines…" (Newell et al., 2011, p. 276). The authors also point out that it is demanding and complex to teach argument in reading and writing because of the wide range of genres that can be used as an argument. Students also have difficulty in the classroom setting formulating their argument for a particular audience and purpose. It is difficult for students to acquire the literary practice for arguments as most classroom texts are narrative and expository.

Most of this review is devoted to cognitive and social perspectives and their effects on teaching and learning argument. Newell et al. (2011) explain that these perspectives should be complementary. They propose that both cognitive and social perspectives are utilized during argument. When one frames argument as a cognitive task, knowledge is more specific and planning and problem solving is used with a model of argument such as Toulmin's model. When one views argument from a social perspective, students are acting and reacting to one another when they are involved in classroom research in the development of an argument. Planning and problem solving should complement the social perspective of students acting and reacting to each other during the process of argument construction.

The authors believe that students will be more engaged in arguments if they are using issues that directly affect their lives and if they know that their audience will react to their arguments. They also believe that collaborative discussion and writing should be incorporated into the argument process and should be ongoing over time (Newell et al., 2011).

In this review, the studies about argument in the field of English language arts focused on a specific element of argument such as knowledge of argument, understanding of knowledge with collaborative reasoning, explicit instruction, and argument from a cognitive and social perspective. The studies reviewed here emphasize the need for argument as an important part of learning (Felton & Herko, 2004; McCann, 1989; Newell et al., 2011; Reznitskaya et al., 2007). The research also shows that students as young as 9 years old can actively engage in the process of argument and that it should scaffold from this point (Felton & Herko, 2004; McCann, 1989). However, it can be challenging to write argument;

therefore it appears helpful that teachers explicitly teach argument utilizing a framework such as the Toulmin model. Writing an argument may also be difficult as it is a form of writing that students are not used to producing due in part to their lack of exposure with this genre of writing. Research further suggests that engaging in collaborative prewriting and revision activities help to make writing argument easier as well as selecting topics that students are familiar with (Hillocks, 2010; Newell et al., 2011). The literature also reveals that there could be problems reading and understanding argument, as this requires a thorough understanding of what was read. Students' reading ability may impact success in understanding argument (Hillocks, 2010; Newell et al., 2011).

Argument in the History/Social Studies Classroom

When students have a strong foundation in argument received in the language arts classroom, it is reasonable to expect that they can transfer this knowledge to the history/social studies classroom. In history/social studies, Appendix A of the CCSS states that "students analyze evidence from multiple primary and secondary sources to advance a claim that is best supported by the evidence, and they argue for a historically or empirically situated interpretation" (Common Core State Standards, Appendix A, 2010, p. 23). According to the standards in history/social studies, sixth grade students must be able to "Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text" (Common Core State Standards, 2010, p. 61). In seventh grade students are "assessing" these components in support of the claim, while in eighth grade they "evaluate" and "corroborate or challenge" the argument.

In history/social studies, it is clear that the CCSS are increasingly more challenging throughout the grade levels in the area of argument. One can conclude that if students achieve these standards through grade twelve, they will be college and career ready. Osborne (2005), a teacher of history in college, advocates that using argumentative debate in the classroom helps students to better understand historical events. However, she posits "This culture of argument is initially alien to most students" (p. 40). With CCSS in history/social studies being implemented, argument should not be unfamiliar to students entering college. Teaching students to become successful in argument is vital as it is an important aspect in most subjects particularly science, where it supports critical reasoning and metacognitive skills necessary for scientific understandings (Belland, 2009; Llewellyn & Rajesh, 2011; McNeill, 2011; Tippet, 2009). The following section highlights various research conducted in the area of scientific argument.

Argument in the Science Classroom

Writing in both history/social studies and science follow the exact same standards for argument, but the way in which students engage in argument in science is different, yet the foundation is still similar. According to the CCSS, Appendix A:

> In science, students make claims in the form of statements or conclusions that answer questions or address problems. Using data in a scientifically acceptable form, students marshal evidence and draw on their understanding of scientific concepts to argue in support of their claims. (p. 23)

An analysis of the standards by grade level reveals a similar "staircase of complexity" that applied to history/social studies. In sixth grade science students are expected to "Distinguish among facts, reasoned judgment based on research findings, and speculation in

a text" (Common Core State Standards, 2010, p. 62). Similar to history/social studies, students in seventh grade have a comparable standard to sixth grade only they are expected to "assess" the argument. Eighth grade students are expected to "evaluate" the components of the argument and "corroborate or challenge conclusions with other sources of information" (Common Core State Standards, 2010, p. 62).

Further evidence of how argument is utilized in the middle school classroom is revealed in a study conducted by Berland and Reiser (2008) in three middle school science classrooms. The authors explain that "in scientific communities, explanations are developed through argumentation" (p.27). They cite three goals for constructing and defending scientific explanations: sensemaking, articulating and persuading. This study utilized three middle school classrooms from three different schools, with a total of 53 students participating. The researchers obtained several data sources that included: observations, daily videotaping, pre/posttests, pre/posttest interviews, and written work. They obtained 92 written responses that ultimately became the basis for the analysis of their findings.

The research revealed that when students constructed and defended their scientific explanations they consistently validated the sense making aspect. Students were then able to successfully articulate their understandings. The analysis revealed differences between the students' explanations, and the authors characterized them by "the level of differentiation between evidence and inferences and the use of persuasive statements" (Berland & Reiser, 2008, p. 47). When students differentiated between their evidence and inference they were more likely to include persuasive statements.

The strength of this research was the deep analysis of the construction of an argument and explanation. It explained how students could be successful at argument when they were able to make sense of the content under study.

In her review of scientific literature, Tippett (2009) claims that "argumentation has been called the language of science" (Tippett, 2009, p. 17). She explains that the goal of science it to use evidence to reach a conclusion, and that in order to arrive at that conclusion, scientists must engage in argument to prove that their claims are valid. This makes science an ideal subject for argument in that there are always questions that need to be answered, claims to be made, and evidence to be found. In many of the investigations in scientific argument, students worked in collaborative groups using a problem-based science topic.

McNeil (2011) focuses on students' ideas about what explanation, argument, and evidence mean to them in the context of science, science class, and their everyday lives. The research also looks at how the students' ability to write scientific arguments changes over the course of the school year. Research was conducted in two diverse fifth-grade classrooms using design-based research.

In this classroom students were introduced to the basic elements of argument. The teacher provided students with support for scientific argument in a variety of ways. For example, in his first lesson, the teacher provided the students with a framework for argument consisting of three components: claim, evidence, and reasoning. Students first had to find out how many different habitats there were in their outdoor classroom. Students went outside and collected data. They then used the provided framework to write their first argument. The next day, the teacher asked them "How long should recess be?" Using this

question, the teacher discussed with his students how to write a strong argument using the framework he provided the previous day. Students were then asked to revise their initial arguments. In a final lesson the teacher had students engage in an actual debate using their claims, evidence, and reasoning for an argument.

The results of this study showed an increase in students' ability to write scientific arguments. Students' views also changed over the course of the year in their views of explanation, argument, and evidence in terms of the science classroom; it helped them to better understand the norms of their classroom. The results also suggest that elementary students are capable of engaging in scientific argument.

One of the primary strengths of this study is that it was conducted over the course of the year and used multiple sources of data. It also took place in a very diverse classroom, taught by an experienced science teacher.

Another study in the area of science argumentation looked at how 7th grade students can use computer-based scaffolds to assist with the production of arguments. The study, conducted by Belland (2009), asserts that students have difficulty with composing a claim, gathering significant evidence, and producing a quality argument. To alleviate this difficulty the author looked at four classes taught by the same science teacher. He randomly assigned two classes the use of a web-based program to assist students with the organization of their argument; the other two classes did not use the program. Of the two classes that used the web-based program, one was considered high-achieving and the other was average-achieving in the area of science. Both of the classes that did not receive the computer-based scaffold were average-achieving in the area of science.

The students in this study engaged in a problem-based learning program working in pairs to produce an argument about the Human Genome Project. The results were divided by level of achievement in the area of science. When the higher-achieving students used the web-based scaffold, there was no difference in the quality of their argument. Conversely, the web-based scaffold was more helpful to average- and lower-achieving students. The author suggests that embedding scaffolds, such as the web-based program they used, may help to improve students' argument skills in middle school (Belland, 2009).

Each of the studies in scientific argument articulates the need for argument in the science curriculum (Belland, 2009; Berland & Reiser, 2008; McNeil, 2011). Yet they each offer a suggestion on how argument can be taught in the classroom providing support and guidance throughout the year, looking at the depth of students' arguments, and providing scaffolds to offer guidance in the construction of an argument. Teaching argument in the classroom encompasses a wide variety of support and skills.

According to the literature most subjects in school can engage in argument. This review reveals that English language arts, history/social studies, and science, are school subjects that rely on an understanding of argument. In the majority of the studies reviewed, argument in all the subject areas was used in a social context, with students working together to compose an argument or explain a phenomena.

Gaps in the Literature

Most studies about teaching students to write arguments have been conducted in first-year composition classes at universities. Far fewer studies look at the teaching of argument

with middle school students. The CCSS emphasis on the teaching of argument across the grades, invites a close examination of how argument is now taught in middle school.

Common Core State Standards emphasize argument in the curriculum in reading, writing, and speaking and listening at all grade levels and subject areas in K-12. Future studies should explore how argument can scaffold through the curriculum at the whole spectrum of K-12.

None of the research in this review mentioned how much teachers know about teaching argument. Llewellyn (2011) mentions that science teachers need to be "mindful" that both Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards emphasize that students need to be competent in the area of scientific argument. The author also warns that science curriculum and professional developers need to be aware of these standards and need to incorporate argument into existing science labs. Professional development in the area of argument needs to be at the forefront of learning for teachers if they are to attempt to incorporate and teach argument (Tippett, 2009). Therefore, future research needs to be conducted on how much teachers actually know about argument so that quality professional development on the subject of argument can take place.

Researchers in the fields of English language arts, history/social studies, and science emphasize the importance of argument within each of these disciplines. The research in these fields and the adoption of the Common Core State Standards suggest that it is important for teachers in middle school to know how to teach argument as a critical element of thinking within the school subjects. If teachers already know a great deal about argument, then they should be well prepared to meet the demands of the CCSS that emphasize argument. The

proposed study seeks to reveal the extent to which middle school teachers are aware of the standards related to argument, and the extent to which teachers are prepared to teach argument within various subjects.

Implications

In the state of Illinois, where this study was conducted, CCSS was mandated to become the target leaning standards by the beginning of the 2014-2015 academic year. With argument being such a major area of learning in the standards, it is imperative that all stakeholders understand how argument should be taught in the classroom. This understanding includes how the CCSS defines argument, which is different than previous standards evasive and often wrongly interpreted view of argument as persuasion. This distinction is significant if one is to benefit from the knowledge acquired through the engagement of argument in all of the content areas.

Students today are growing up in the "Age of Information" and therefore need to learn how to navigate this information-rich environment to meet the ever-more demanding pace of preparation for college and career (Common Core State Standards Initiative, Appendix A, 2010). Therefore, it is essential that teachers know how to teach argument. Using the Toulmin model as a framework for teaching and learning argument is ideal as it aligns with the CCSS expectations.

A review of the literature about argument emphasized the value of teaching and learning about argument in K-12 classrooms. The review underscores the importance of argument as a process for thinking about key concepts in various disciplines. Felton and

Kuhn (2001) note that engaging in the procedures of argument leads students to increase their critical thinking skills and reasoning: "in definitions of critical thinking, the effective use and comprehension of argument invariably figure prominently" (p. 150).

Evident throughout the literature was the understanding that argument can and should be taught to students beginning at the elementary level. Belland (2009) emphasizes that the strongest predictor of college and career readiness is the academic performance at the 8th grade level. In the CCSS one of the college and career readiness standards is the ability to write and engage in argument. Therefore, argument needs to be taught early so that students can be successful at it by the time they reach 8th grade, when students are at the peak of their academic success.

A recurring theme across the review of the literature is that argument must be taught through explicit instruction (Belland, 2009; Erduran et al, 2004; Hillocks, 2010; Reznitskaya et al. 2007; Tippett, 2009). In Tippett's (2009) literature review of science argumentation, one of the themes that she emphasized was that explicit instruction about argument assists students in producing more effective arguments. She highlighted several studies that used integrated scaffolds such as computer programs that helped students to construct their arguments through the use of visuals. Belland's (2009) research was based on the impact of hard scaffolds on student's ability to evaluate argument and its impact on the quality of group argument. Consequently, this evidence suggests that teachers have an important role in the instruction of argument in the classroom.

Summary

While there are many definitions of argument, this study focuses on argument as it relates to informal reasoning. This definition of argument is best understood in the framework for argument developed by Stephen E. Toulmin (1958). The conceptual framework for this study was influenced by the works of Toulmin, who developed a model for argument that is widely used in understanding how to construct an argument. Consequently, many experts in the field of argument have likewise been influenced by Toulmin and the Toulmin model (Berland & Reiser, 2008; Felton & Herko, 2004; Hillocks, 2011; McCann, 1989; McNeill, 2011; Newell et al., 2011; Prusak et al., 2012; Smagorinsky et al., 2011; Reznitskaya et al., 2007; Smith, 1984; Smith et al., 2012).

This review provided a comprehensive examination of argument as an area of emphasis in the Common Core State Standards. Further, I have explained how well the components of the Toulmin model are connected to CCSS in the area of argument, which further supports the Toulmin model as the framework for this study. Previously, in the state of Illinois, standards for argument mainly consisted of elements of persuasion, which differs from the conception of argument in the CCSS. This review explained how argument and persuasion are different. Furthermore, for each core subject area, standards for argument are written in the CCSS. Consequently, this review looked at how argument was supported in each core subject area. Finally, gaps in the literature as well as implications were explained. The methodology of this study will be explained in chapter three.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to examine how prepared middle school teachers are to teach argument in the classroom. The main objective is to determine how Common Core State Standards pertaining to argument are being interpreted and implemented into teachers' classrooms. I investigated this objective through surveys, classroom observations, and interviews. I discuss the research method next, under these seven headings: research questions, research design, participants, data collection, data analysis, and the limitations for this study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. What do teachers report that they know about how to teach argument in their classroom?

2. How do middle school teachers' approaches to teaching argument align with the conception of argument envisioned by the Common Core State Standards?

3. How do middle school teachers' approaches to the teaching of writing argument reveal what they know about principled practices in the teaching of writing?

Research Design

Studies that have been conducted in the area of argument have employed a variety of research designs. Two noteworthy studies used quantitative methods (Felton & Kuhn, 2001; Reznitskaya, et. al., 2007). In both, researchers used dialogues and/or utterances from students' arguments and converted them into a coding scheme for analysis. A qualitative study (Erduran, et. al., 2004) and case studies (Douek, 1999; Prusak, et. al., 2011) have also been used in studying argument where researchers conducted classroom observations or worked with pre-service teachers. They also observed how students worked collaboratively or alone on argument skills taught to them. A final study employed a mixed method-design (Belland, 2009).

According to Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, and Turner (2007), mixed-methods research respects the viewpoints of both qualitative and quantitative methods, meeting somewhere between the philosophies of the two methods. The mixed-methods design is based on the philosophies of the pragmatic paradigm which posits "that there is a single 'real world' and that all individuals have their own unique interpretations of that world" (Mertens, 2010, p.36). In the pragmatic paradigm the methods of research are guided by the study. Hence the methods chosen by the researcher are those that are best suited for answering the research questions. Also, the use of a mixed method provides the researcher with multiple approaches in order to understand the research on several levels, which could not be accomplished by utilizing a single technique (Mertens, 2010).

For this study, the explanatory sequential mixed-methods design was implemented in two different phases (see Table 1). The first phase was the collection and analysis of

quantitative data. To understand the results from the quantitative data, a second phase was conducted, using qualitative measures to help explain the quantitative results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Table 1

Visual Model of Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods Design

Step	**Procedure**	**Product**
Phase One		
Quantitative Data Collection ↓	• Pilot tested survey (*n* = 20) • Self-constructed survey (*n* = 34)	• Numeric data
Quantitative Data Analysis ↓	• Data analysis	• Descriptive statistics
Participant Selection; Interview and Observation Protocol Development ↓	• Purposeful selection of 4 participants • Interview questions developed • Observation procedures developed	• Participants (N = 4) • Interview protocol • Observation protocol
Phase Two		
Qualitative Data Collection ↓	• Individual face-to-face interviews with participants • Observation field notes • Member checks	• Text data (interview transcripts, observation transcripts) • Documents obtained from observations
Qualitative Data Analysis ↓	• Coding and thematic analysis	• Codes and themes
Integration of the Quantitative and Qualitative Results	• Interpretation and explanation of the quantitative and qualitative results	• Discussion • Implications • Future research

SOURCE: Diagram based on Creswell and Plano Clark (2011).

Participants

Participants in this study were middle school teachers in the Chicago area. The participants taught at schools that have implemented, or were in the process of implementing Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Argument is a significant component of CCSS and, consequently, teachers may have more of an awareness of teaching argument in their classroom if they have background knowledge in CCSS.

In the sequential explanatory design, sampling occurs at two points: in the quantitative phase, respondents completed a survey; and in the qualitative phase, participants were interviewed and observed (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). For the purpose of collecting quantitative data, the first sample of participants was chosen using a convenience sample. A survey, constructed by the researcher utilizing a modified Delphi Technique, was distributed to approximately 200 middle school teachers in 11 middle schools. The schools that were part of the convenience sample were within a 20 mile radius of my school district in the Chicago area. Table 2 shows demographic information for each of the 11 middle schools chosen.

An email (Appendix A) was sent to eleven middle school principals who were then asked to forward the emails to their teachers. The email explained the survey and provided a link to the survey via SurveyMonkey. The survey served a dual purpose: first, it was used to collect quantitative data about how prepared middle school teachers are to teach argument in the classroom; the survey was also used to select the four teachers that I interviewed and observed for the qualitative phase of my research. During the qualitative phase of my

research I interviewed and observed the participants selected. In order to select participants for this phase, I honored the criteria discussed below (Mertens, 2010).

Table 2

School Snapshot (IRC)

School	Total Enrollment	Average Class Size	Instructional Spending	Grade Levels
School 1	430	17	$5,561	6-8
School 2	865	24	$5,531	6-8
School 3	802	23	$5,109	7-8
School 4	610	26	$4,727	7-8
School 5	670	29	$4,727	7-8
School 6	757	26	$8,391	6-8
School 7	596	23	$8,391	6-8
School 8	533	25	$8,391	6-8
School 9	778	25	$8,939	6-8
School 10	640	23	$6,937	6-8
School 11	666	21	$6,937	6-8

SOURCE: Illinois State Board of Education @www.illinoisreportcard.com

The first criterion that I considered when selecting participants was their willingness to participate in my research based on their answer to my final survey question. The final survey question asked participants if they would be willing to participate in phase two of the study. I then confirmed that participants taught a subject that supported the use of argument in their curriculum (i.e., language arts, history, or science). Also, participants needed to teach argument in their classroom; and argument instruction needed to include a written format, in order to address the third research question, which states, "How do middle school teachers' approaches to the teaching of writing argument reveal what they know about principled practices in the teaching of writing?" These criteria were used to select the participants for interviews and observations.

Once the four participants met these criteria, I sent an email to obtain permission to participate in a classroom observation and an interview about how they teach argument in their classroom. At the first face-to-face meeting with each participant I explained my research to them and asked them to complete a consent form (Appendix B). In order to insure the privacy of the participants' I gave them pseudonyms: Annie, Beth, Chris, and Debbie are the names that I have assigned to the participants. These names are used throughout this study.

Annie was the first participant that I interviewed and observed. She taught her first argument lesson in the fall when I was invited into her classroom to collect my data. Annie was a seventh grade Language arts teacher, who had been teaching for 11-15 years, she taught the same grade level for her entire teaching career. In our first interview Annie revealed to me that this was only her second year teaching argument writing. She admitted that being involved as one of the pilot classrooms for last year's pilot PARCC test obligated her to teach argument writing. She revealed that she "fit in" argument writing just before the pilot test, and felt somewhat confident teaching it this year. Her classroom was very inviting, with many posters decorating the walls: How-to posters for writing, types of writing posters, inspirational posters, and plenty of student work displayed around the room. About 27 students were arranged stadium style, all facing toward the front of the class with two to three desks pushed together. Throughout most of her instruction, Annie taught her lesson using an Elmo projector, while positioned at the front of the class. Student interaction was minimal and social mediation amongst the students was absent. It took two class periods, on different days, to complete the observation in Annie's class.

I interviewed and observed Beth in the early spring, one week before state testing. During our first interview, Beth confessed that she was fitting argument writing in, hoping to finish before state testing began. She had been teaching Language arts for 11-15 years in the same grade level; eighth grade. Her classroom was set up in a traditional arrangement: desks facing the front, in rows, no desks touching. Beth's instruction was fast paced, yet efficient. Nearly 30 students used a packet and highlighted while Beth instructed solely from her Elmo in the front of the room. There was no student interaction other than to ask students if they had questions, which they never did. Students never interacted nor did they speak. I observed in Beth's class for one class period, as she was able to fit an entire argument writing lesson in that one period.

Chris invited me to observe during state testing in early spring. Chris had also been teaching seventh grade Language arts for 11-15 years and remained at that level for her entire teaching career. She co-taught with a special education teacher for the block of Language arts that I observed. Also in the class was a para-professional who was assigned to an autistic student in the class. This was Chris' first time teaching argument and she was utilizing a debate format in order to teach the components of argument. On the day of the observation, students were debating other students, one student against another, in front of the rest of their peers. Students had composed either affirmative or negative statements to be read off of notes they had written. Approximately 24 students were arranged stadium style with rows of four desks touching but facing the front of the classroom. Chris sat at her desk for the duration of the lesson and her co-teacher stood at the front, sometimes sitting on Chris' desk. The para professional was seated in the back of the room near the student she was assisting.

The culture of the classroom was a bit chaotic, as some students were at the front of the room presenting, some were listening to the debates, while others were working on a vocabulary assignment they did not finish the day before. Only one class period was needed to collect data for Chris' classroom.

The last participant interviewed and observed was Debbie. Debbie was also interviewed and observed during state testing. Unlike the other three participants, Debbie had been teaching for 16-20 years, but only 6-10 years in her current position as a seventh grade Language arts teacher. Previously she taught self-contained fifth grade enrichment in the same district, but at the intermediate school. During our first interview, Debbie explained that this was her third year teaching argument. She did not have any professional development in argument but she did research and read books on argument and taught herself. The classroom observed was an enrichment classroom of only 15 students. Enrichment students qualified for this Language arts class by meeting very high rigorous standards. The classroom was inviting as students sat 3-4 at one of the four round tables in the room, making it ideal for student collaboration. Debbie constantly moved around the room and used various tools for teaching, such as a smart board for a Power Point and videos, a dry erase board that she wrote on, and a separate dry erase board that students wrote on. Students were very comfortable and talked freely in Debbie's class. They were very cooperative and excited with the lessons that Debbie taught them. I observed two class sessions on two consecutive days.

Data Collection

Data were collected in two phases: The quantitative phase included the self-constructed survey, and the qualitative phase included interviews and observations of each participant. The research questions for this study informed which data collection strategies I chose. Table 3 describes the relationship between each question and the data collection instruments utilized to answer each question.

Table 3

Research Questions Aligned with Data Collection Instruments

Research Questions	**Survey**	**Observation**	**Interview**
1. What do teachers report that they know about how to teach argument in their classroom?	X	X	X
2. How do middle school teachers' approaches to teaching argument align with the conception of argument envisioned by the Common Core State Standards?	X	X	X
3. How do middle school teachers' approaches to the teaching of writing argument reveal what they know about principled practices in the teaching of writing?		X	X

Quantitative Phase: The Self-Constructed Survey

In order to select appropriate participants for my research in the teaching of argument in middle schools, I utilized a survey. The survey helped to determine the participants that I interviewed and observed, as well as conveying information about how prepared middle school teachers are to teach argument in the classroom. I constructed the survey using a

modified version of the Delphi Technique. The following sections include an overview of the Delphi Technique, the steps involved in developing the survey instrument, selecting the panel of experts and the rounds process, and the completed survey.

Overview of the Delphi Technique

The Delphi Technique was developed in the 1950's by the Rand Corporation during a series of studies being conducted at that time (Mertens, 2010; Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004; Skulmoski, Hartman & Krahn, 2007). Since the introduction of the Delphi Technique, researchers have established many variations of this method; however, most variations follow the key features of the Classical Delphi. These key features include the following: anonymity of Delphi participants, iteration, controlled feedback, and statistical aggregation of group response (Skulmoski et al., 2007). Essentially, the Delphi Technique involves the use of experts (known as participants) in the field, allowing them to contribute ideas that are of importance and should be included in a survey on a certain topic. The researcher asks the experts to anonymously pose ideas for the survey. The researcher will then construct the survey and redistribute it to the experts for feedback. This process continues until all are satisfied with the contents of the survey (Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Mertens, 2010; Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004). Linstone and Turoff (1975) claim that the advantage of using this method "is the feedback of the information gathered from the group and the opportunity of the individuals to modify or refine their judgments based upon their reaction to the collective views of the group" (p. 22). They also posit that there is no single way of conducting the Delphi; rather, there are a variety of methods that are tailored for various types of research.

The typical Delphi process involves several steps that include the aforementioned key features of the Classical Delphi. The first steps are to compose the research questions and then design the research, which may be qualitative, quantitative, or both (Skulmoski et al., 2007). The next step involves the selection of the research participants, which is a critical step in the process as "it is their expert opinions upon which the output of the Delphi is based" (Skulmoski et al., 2007, p. 3). Okoli and Pawlowski (2004) recommend creating a Knowledge Resource Nomination Worksheet, which organizes a list of experts based on disciplines or skills, organizations, and related literature. Skulmoski et al. (2007) recommend that experts have at least the following four requirements: "Knowledge and experience with the issue under investigation; capacity and willingness to participate; sufficient time to participate in the Delphi; and, effective communication skills" (p. 4). Okoli and Pawlowski (2004) suggest 10-18 experts as the target numbers for a panel, but other studies have used as few as four and as many as 171 experts for their sample size (Skulmoski et al., 2007).

Once the experts have been selected, notified, and committed to the Delphi, the researcher will create the first questionnaire based on their research questions. This questionnaire will be used in the first round of the Delphi Technique. Skulmoski et al. (2007) suggest that novices may want to pilot this first round of questions to better estimate the time the questionnaire will take.

The next step in the Delphi Technique is the heart of this process and is typically conducted in three phases or "rounds." In the first round, the researcher sends out the first questionnaire. This is typically a brainstorming phase where the experts are asked to choose the most important issues from a list generated by the researcher. Schmidt (1997)

recommends that experts choose six of the most important issues. He also suggests that experts explain each of the issues they chose to keep terminology consistent amongst experts. The researcher will then analyze the responses and create a single list. This list should be consolidated and provide a description of each issue that lists all terms together. Schmidt (1997) contends that it is highly important at this point to validate the experts' responses by verifying "that the terms have been properly mapped and that their ideas have been fairly represented" (p. 769).

The second round of the Delphi is the "narrowing down" phase (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2004). The researcher will send the experts a randomly ordered, consolidated list that was created in the first round; this is the second round questionnaire. Schmidt (1997) recommends that experts select at least 10% of the most important issues from this questionnaire, because setting an amount helps to force the results. At this point, experts should also be given the opportunity to change or expand on their responses from round one, as they will see how others have responded in the first round. Skulmoski et al. (2007) posits that this "continuous verification throughout the Delphi process is critical to improve the reliability of the results" (p. 4). Once all of the experts have responded to this second questionnaire, the researcher will once again analyze the results, but this time the results will be pared down even further to a manageable list. Although this manageable list will vary in size depending on the research, Okoli and Palowski (2004) recommend a list of 20 to 23 items for the final round questionnaire. A third and final round may be used to further pare down the final questions. This step requires experts to submit a rank ordering of the issues,

and provide feedback to justify their rankings. The process will stop once consensus is reached.

The Delphi Technique is useful for its versatility and is ideal to use with new research areas (Okoli & Pawlowski, 2003). The process described above was a compilation of various Delphi research designs. Most of the designs were used in the area of Systems Information. In the development of my survey instrument, I used various aspects from many different Delphi designs that best suited my purpose. The following section details how I used the flexible Delphi Technique to construct the survey instrument for my research.

Development of the Survey Instrument

As explained in the previous section, the Delphi Technique is a flexible research technique that has been successfully used in various areas of research (Skulmoski et al., 2007). According to Skulmoski et al. (2007) some of the areas of research where the Delphi Technique has been employed are education and healthcare, where it has been used in at least 280 dissertations and theses. Consequently, it is with this endorsement and confidence that I chose to employ the Delphi Technique to create the survey for my research.

I constructed a panel of experts from a group of academic who have a record of scholarly publications that focus on the teaching of argument. The purpose of the survey was to capture the essence of the current state of preparation of middle school teachers in teaching argument in the classroom. Additionally, the survey was utilized to select participants to interview and observe for my research.

Selecting the Panel of Experts and the Rounds Process

Once the research questions and design were established, a panel of experts was assembled. Linstone and Turoff (1975) claim that there are "no general rules of thumb for creating panels" (p. 68), but that the panel should consist of people who are stakeholders, experts, or facilitators in the field that you are researching. With this in mind, the panel I created reflected all three types of panelists but mainly consisted of experts in the field of teaching argument. I created a list of 10 experts, which is adequate according to Day and Bobeva (2005).

While my intention was to follow the format of the Delphi Technique and utilize the rounds phases to complete and validate my survey, I implemented a modified format of the Delphi Technique. As mentioned previously, the Delphi Technique is very flexible, allowing for a modified path to creating the survey. Since I had drafted a set of survey items that seemed to a panel of university professors to be appropriate, I judged that it would not be necessary to complete the first two rounds of the Delphi. Therefore, once I contacted the experts via email I was able to begin the Delphi Technique with the third round.

I sent emails (Appendix C) to eight of the ten experts on my generated list of experts. From my original list of ten experts, one expert was ill and another expert had passed away. The email explained the purpose of my research. I explained that they would be involved in an abbreviated version of the Delphi Technique in which a limited amount of their time would be needed in order to react to a draft of the survey I had created. If they were willing to participate they needed to simply open the attachment of the draft survey and begin the process. Of the eight emails that I sent six experts replied to me. One could not participate

as he had a sick family member; but five experts agreed to participate. Of the five experts, four of them have earned Ph.Ds. in education and work as educators in English; three at the university level and one at the high school level. Four of the experts have published books on writing focusing on argument writing, and one is the director of the writing department at a university. One of the experts is quoted in the CCSS documents in support of argument writing as an emphasis in the curriculum.

The experts were able to assist me in completing the survey that I would send out to several teachers. Three of the experts validated the survey right away. Two experts also gave their validation but suggested alternatives to wording and grouping of questions. One expert suggested that questions 5-7 and 10 should be grouped together as one question, "A solid argument would" and then four subset questions to follow. The second expert suggested that I revise the wording on question 7 to clarify its intent. This question was revised with the preface of "a solid argument would" as recommended by the first expert, which made the question more coherent. The entire process of validation took several weeks.

Validity and Reliability of the Delphi Technique

Merriam (2009) recommends validating research through "careful attention to a study's conceptualization and the way in which the data are collected, analyzed and interpreted" (p. 210). Given the careful attention to the steps involved in collecting, analyzing and interpreting the data using the Delphi Technique, there are various ways in which a researcher can validate the process. However, the actual construction of the Delphi survey is qualitative in nature and therefore was assessed through qualitative validation.

According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) qualitative research is focused more on validity with reliability being less of a factor.

In the Delphi Technique, internal validity or credibility was proven through the use of triangulation. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) define triangulation as "data drawn from several sources or several individuals" (p. 211). Triangulation is applied in the Delphi Technique by acquiring data from multiple experts. As mentioned previously, there is no set amount, but the number of experts can range from 4 – 171 (Skulmoski et al., 2007). In my research a total of 5 experts provided me with valuable data, based on their expertise, for my survey.

Reliability or consistency of the Delphi Technique is employed through the use of audit trails (Day & Bobeva, 2005; Skulmoski et al., 2007). Merriam (2009) defines the audit trail as "a detailed account of how the study was conducted and how the data were analyzed" (p. 223). I have detailed each step in the process of creating the Delphi survey.

The Completed Survey

Once I validated the survey with my panel of experts, I constructed the survey to be pilot tested. The pilot survey consisted of 15 questions: 10 questions relating to each of the three research questions, and 5 demographic questions. The demographic questions included the following items: teaching level, years of teaching experience, teaching experience in current school, primary subject(s) taught, and any professional development they experienced in the area of argument. The 15 questions were comprised of a mix of Likert style questions and multiple choice questions. Orcher (2007) recommends allowing the respondents of the

pilot test to respond to any questions that are unclear and to write notes in the margin of the test. With this recommendation, I added three questions to the end of the pilot test asking how long the test took, if the directions were clear, and if there were any questions they did not understand. I pilot tested the survey using 20 participants from my school. Most respondents of the pilot survey revealed that the directions were clear. They reported that the time it took them to complete the survey was 3 to 5 minutes. This report helped to establish a time frame for the actual survey. One respondent suggested that I add in "I don't know" as a fifth rating on the scale. I used their feedback about the clarity and format of the pilot survey to create a final version of the survey. I also used this group of participants as a norming group in order to establish the reliability of the survey instrument by looking at consistency across respondents.

The completed survey (Appendix D) was then distributed to 11 Chicago area middle school principals via SurveyMonkey. I first contacted principals at the 11 middle schools via email (Appendix E) and asked the principals to distribute the surveys to their staff by mass email. The principals were then asked to provide me with a count of how many teachers to whom they sent the surveys. Approximately 200 surveys were sent with a response rate of 17%. The survey concluded with a final question asking participants if they would be interested in being involved in further research on the topic of argument. If their response was yes, then they were instructed to email me so that they could provide me with their contact information.

Validity and Reliability of the Survey Instrument

In order to establish the reliability of the survey instrument, I employed experts in the field of argument to assist me in validating the survey. Reliability is strengthened when the researcher provides a description of each expert so that readers can evaluate their relevance and authority on the topic (Schmidt, 1997). According to Day and Bobeva (2005) both reliability and validity of the completed survey are supported when the researcher provides a detailed audit trail. A detailed account of the process as well as the experts' contributions to the field of argument was provided in the previous section titled *Selecting the Panel of Experts and the Rounds Process*.

Skulmoski et al. (2007) and Linstone and Turloff (1975) both support that the Delphi Technique is valid. Therefore, this researcher concludes that the Delphi Technique and the survey constructed using this technique are both valid and reliable. The use of member checks, triangulation, and an audit trail add to the validity and reliability of the Delphi Technique. The validity and reliability of the survey instrument is proven through the use of audit trails and the credibility of the experts.

Qualitative Phase: Interviews and Observations

Once the participants were chosen from the completed survey I conducted interviews and observations of the four selected participants. The following sections explain how I gathered data through interviews as well as observations; which were conducted using a principled practice framework developed by Boudreau Smith (2012), as described in Chapter 2.

Interviews

Merriam (2009) claims that most, if not all, qualitative research will include interviews at some point. The most common form of interviews is the person-to-person interview, which is the type of interview that I conducted with my participants.

Interviews were semi-structured in the initial meeting, and became more formal and structured in the second interview. The initial interview was conducted with each teacher in her classroom before the scheduled classroom observation. The purpose of the initial interview was to gather each individual's perspective on teaching argument in the classroom. Each initial interview (Appendix F) took approximately 15 minutes. Once the observation was completed, a second interview (Appendix G) took place in the teacher's classroom; this interview followed a structured protocol with questions from a list generated during the observation. The second interview took between 20-30 minutes.

Observations

I observed four teachers in order to obtain a depth of understanding and collect authentic classroom data. Merriam (2009) notes the value of direct observations: "Observational data represent a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest rather than a secondhand account of the data obtained in an interview" (p. 117). The role that I assumed during observations was that of the *observer as participant*, which means that the group being observed knew that I was there observing, but I had limited participation in the group (Merriam, 2009).

I observed two of the participants twice and two participants once. The observation time depended on how much of the argument lesson could be taught in a class session or two, which was determined at the initial interview with each teacher. I observed each teacher using a framework for observation based on Boudreau Smith's (2012) principled practice framework, as described in Chapter 2.

The observational framework that I used relied on a content analysis technique and is based on a principled practice approach to the teaching of writing. In the following sections, I will explain what *principled practice* is, how Boudreau Smith (2012) created a framework for observation using *principled practice,* and how I used this concept to create the observational framework to support a content analysis technique.

Principled Practice

In order to evaluate how much middle school teachers know about teaching argument in the classroom, there must be established criteria by which to judge their knowledge. In order to assess teacher's knowledge of teaching argument, I observed middle school teachers instructing students how to write argument. Judging the knowledge of how teachers teach writing is difficult because there are different approaches and philosophies in the teaching of writing thus why I chose to evaluate writing through the lens of *principled practice*. Boudreau Smith (2012) reviewed 50 years of research in the teaching of writing and identified intersections across different conceptions of effective instruction. She concludes that if teachers followed instructional practices informed by research, this "*principled practice*" would feature a few key components.

To understand the premise of *principled practice*, one must be familiar with the various approaches to teaching writing. Smagorinsky (2009) observes that, there are three major approaches to teaching writing. The method of writing instruction that is most widely practiced, but according to research the least effective, is the *presentational* approach. The *presentational* approach is a product-oriented approach and the method most widely recognized in textbooks (Smagorinsky, 2009). The *presentational* approach uses mostly models of other students' writings with the teacher presenting what to write, with very little student involvement, and less attention to teaching students the *procedures* to writing.

The *general process* approach is an individualistic approach to teaching writing advocated by Atwell (1998), Graves (1994), Calkins (1994), and others. This approach to teaching writing emphasizes, "writer's workshops," characterized by the individual attention students receive from the teacher and the choices they are allowed to make in topics to read and write about. Proponents of this approach posit that it "helps to unleash each child's natural developmental pace and trajectory free of teacher agendas and interference" (Smagorinsky, 2009, p. 16).

The third approach, and the one that Smagorinsky most identifies with, is the *structured process* or *environmental* approach, sometimes labeled as "inquiry-based learning." This approach, according to research, is the most effective at teaching writing but is the least practiced approach of the three (Smagorinsky, 2009). Inquiry-based writing is based on research and teaching of Hillocks (1986). In a *structured process*, students seek to learn and practice procedures that are important for specific writing tasks. "Hillocks' approach employs a form of instructional scaffolding that is task-based and discussion-

driven" (Smagorinsky, 2009, p. 16). Hillocks (1986) has reviewed research over a 20-year period between 1963 and 1983, and through the results of his research he claims that an inquiry-based approach to writing instruction offers the most promise (Smagorinsky, 2009). In 1986, Hillocks published *Research on Written Composition*, which contains a meta-analysis of more than 100 studies. This study and other major studies since have "provided guidelines for the development of several research-based writing instruction manuals" (Boudreau Smith, 2012, p. 10). It is this approach on which Smagorinsky, as a former student of Hillocks, has based much of his own teaching and research. This is also the basis of his instructional planning of writing approach, *principled practice*.

Principled practice is a term borrowed from Applebee (1986), but developed into an approach for instructional planning by Smagorinsky (2002, 2009). Smagorinsky (2009) explains that *principled practice* "focuses on the why of teaching: why teaching methods work in particular ways in particular settings" (p. 20). This approach to writing instruction challenges teachers to think about materials available to them, their diverse students, their own beliefs about teaching and how students learn, and the culture of the school in which they teach (Smagorinsky, 2002). Given all of these attributes, teachers must decide the most effective way to teach in particular situations. With this in mind, this approach takes into account the features of both the writer's workshop and inquiry-based writing approaches. It does not include the presentational approach, as research has proven that this method is relatively ineffective at teaching students how to write (Smagorinsky, 2009).

Principled Practice Observational Framework

In order to observe teacher's writing practices for research purposes, Boudreau Smith (2012) developed an observational framework based on the concept of *principled practice*. Her assertion is that effective writing teachers would follow *principled practice* if their instructional approaches were consistent with those supported by the related research. Her research finds commonalities between competing theories, and these intersections become the components of *principled practice*. Boudreau Smith (2012) identifies six components that comprise the *principled practice* framework, which are described in the following sub-sections.

Writers Need Strategies and Heuristics, Not Formulas. According to Boudreau Smith (2012), the first component to emerge from the research is that writers need "to engage in strategies and heuristics, not formulas, to grow as writers" (p. 15). Heuristics and strategies engage students in procedural knowledge, which teaches students how to write. Formulas are the basis of instruction in the five-paragraph essay. The type of learning in this approach (traditional) to writing is declarative in nature and focuses more on *what* to write, it does not teach students *how* to write. According to Smith et al., (2012), declarative knowledge will only lead students to understand features of a written product. In contrast, an emphasis on learning procedural knowledge, the type of knowledge students engage in both in writer's workshops and inquiry-based instruction, allows students to know how to create the features of a specific type of writing. Therefore, teaching strategies and heuristics will engage students in a deeper understanding of how to write.

Writing is about Process, Not Product. Boudreau Smith (2012) discusses a study conducted by Applebee and Langer (2011) which claimed that English teachers focus more on what parts must be included in writing, rather than engaging in various process activities. According to the research, Boudreau Smith (2012) found that teachers should be engaging their students in the steps in the process of writing. This process needs to be structured by the teacher and include activities such as, engaging students in generating ideas, talking, and working in groups to plan, edit, and revise. Boudreau Smith (2012) warns that this type of instruction does not eliminate the teaching of grammar, mechanics, and form, but that teachers should engage students in mini-lessons and individual conferences to improve these components. Finally, engaging in process instruction takes time and should be conducted over several class periods. This is in opposition to the "time saving" activities that many teachers choose and that have no impact on the improvement of student writing.

Instruction must be Scaffolded and Aligned to Specific Writing Tasks. According to Smagorinsky (2002), "Scaffolding refers to the way in which experienced and capable people assist others in learning new knowledge and skills" (p. 19). In order to provide scaffolding in a *principled practice*, Boudreau Smith (2012) found that it is delivered in two different ways. Meeting the needs of individual learners is one way in which learning is scaffolded. Additionally, the teacher scaffolds the instruction according to the objective of the lesson being taught.

Instructional Activities are Teacher-Orchestrated but Student-led. Scaffolding the instruction requires teachers to be mindful of the sequence of the lesson design, which can be either conducted through a workshop environment or inquiry-based lesson. Both approaches

call for the teacher to design the lesson, a final product, and a series of tasks in which students engage in to complete the final product. The most important aspect of this principle is that the teacher engages students in student-centered activities, rather than teacher-centered instruction (Boudreau Smith, 2012).

Writing is Socially-Mediated. One of the key values of a principled practice is that students learn through social interaction. Boudreau Smith (2012) found that the research supports the notion of a socially-mediated classroom in both approaches to writing. The underlying theories of inquiry-based learning are based on Vygotskian concepts, "which are concerned with the ways in which people learn to think based on their interactions with people who surround them" (Smagorinsky, 2009, p. 18). In the inquiry-based classroom the teacher has identified the themes and designed the sequence of the lessons, but it is the students who will work together to solve the given problems.

Social interaction is also evident in the workshop-based approach as students interact with each other and their teacher during peer and student conferences, and during teacher modeling and coaching (Boudreau Smith, 2012). In the principled classroom students are working together to create meaning, they engage in discussions, and they work together to edit, revise, and finally "publish" their writing.

Reflection is Essential to Cognition. Incorporating reflection into instruction is vital in the principled classroom. Allowing students to reflect on their learning is essential for students to transfer newly acquired knowledge. This knowledge is essential to further their writing as well as transferring the knowledge to other content areas (Hillocks, 1999; Smagorinsky, 2009; Smith et al., 2013). Boudreau Smith (2012) posits that reflective pieces

are composed while students learn to monitor their own procedures and planning in the workshop-based approach. In the inquiry-based approach, both teacher and students engage in reflective practice. Teachers continually reflect on instruction and its effects on student learning (Smagorinsky, 2009). For students, reflection is the final stage of the inquiry-based process, where students reflect in writing on the knowledge they acquired by engaging in the process (Boudreau Smith, 2012).

Boudreau Smith (2012) draws from a review of 50 years of research in the teaching of writing to identify six components of *principled practice.* This research-based framework connects with teaching argument as envisioned in the new Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The elements of *principled practice* offer a framework for observing educators teaching writing to judge the extent to which they appear to be prepared to teach argument.

Framework for Classroom Observations

Smith et al. (2013) warn that "The Common Core and the assessments designed to measure them call for much more than the formulaic writing and thinking that too often characterizes school efforts to meet existing state standards" (p. 48). They explain that the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) emphasize writing argument, and that traditional approaches to teaching writing will not meet these CCSS. The authors contend that an inquiry-based approach is a useful framework for meeting these new standards in argument writing. Smith et al. (2013) explain that traditional approaches only teach declarative knowledge, the knowledge of *what*, but it is the procedural knowledge, the knowledge of *how*, that is needed in order to engage in argument writing successfully. The six components

of a *principled practice* engage students in procedural knowledge, which makes it an appropriate framework for observing teachers providing instruction in the form of argumentation.

To ascertain if educators are teaching argument that aligns with *principled practice* when teaching argument, I used the Argument Writing Observational Rubric (Appendix H) based in part on a rubric developed by Boudreau Smith (2012) founded on her research on *principled practice.* In order to validate the rubric that she developed, Boudreau Smith used a process known as inter-coder agreement. This process involves several individuals working together to code a transcript, compare results, and determine if the results are consistent (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Boudreau Smith used several independent raters and removed herself from the coding process. The raters were trained on the components of principled practice. To ensure consistency among the raters, Boudreau Smith conducted a pilot of the *principled practice* rubric; the raters coded the data and then checked each other's results for consistency. The independent raters utilized this same process to validate the consistency of their results with the actual data from the study (Boudreau Smith, 2012). I used this framework to observe and analyze teachers teaching argument in order to answer my research questions.

Data Analysis

This study relies on a mixed methods design. The data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) refer to this type of data analysis as the mixed methods analysis. This section describes how I analyzed the

quantitative data once the participants completed the survey. Analysis of the qualitative phase includes transcription procedures and coding procedures of both the interviews and observations. Also included in the qualitative phase are the integrity procedures for both the interviews and the observations.

Quantitative Phase: Analysis of the Survey Instrument

In the spring, I sent out the argument survey via SurveyMonkey to approximately 200 teachers in the Chicago area. By the end of the school year, I had received a total of 34 responses to my survey with 26 respondents completing the survey in its entirety, including 4 teachers who gave permission to contact them about further research. At this point I closed the survey and proceeded to analyze the data. The quantitative questions included Likert style questions and multiple choice questions. I offer descriptive statistics of frequency and percent to show patterns among the responses. These findings are reported in Chapter 4.

Qualitative Phase: Transcription Procedures

According to Seidman (2013), the recording and transcription of the data collected is important, as this step helps to capture the participant's thoughts. Seidman (2013) explains that researchers must be careful to record the data, and while labor intensive, transcribe the data as it was recorded. With this in mind, I recorded both the interviews and the observations on a digital voice recorder. I then transcribed the data using Dragon Dictation, a software program that recognizes voice and turns it into text. All dictation was typed using the exact wording of the participant, with no editing for conventions of written language.

Transcripts use pseudonyms to ensure the confidentiality of the participants. Participants were invited to review the transcripts to check for accuracy of the interview responses.

Qualitative Phase: Coding Procedures

After all of the interviews and observations were transcribed, two trained readers coded the transcripts. To achieve this analysis, I used inter-coder agreement to check the reliability of the coding, following the procedures outlined by Boudreau Smith (2012). Inter-coder agreement "involves having several individuals code a transcript and then compare their work to determine whether they arrived at the same codes and themes or different ones" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 212). I trained two doctoral students to become the transcript readers, to code my data. Both of these readers were doctoral students in educational leadership working on their dissertations, as well as being experienced classroom teachers. The training involved an orientation into the purpose of the study and the Toulmin model for informal reasoning. I also reviewed the six components of *principled practice* in detail. I provided a "reference sheet" (Appendix I) to assist the readers in coding the data. The reference sheet consisted of argument terms and brief descriptions of what each of the six components of *principled practice* are. I trained the readers by using a transcript collected from a teacher's lesson acquired from a teacher not included in the study. This training protocol provided the readers with the opportunity to practice the coded lesson transcript independently and then compare and discuss the coding. The readers coded the transcript in a way that was consistent with the framework they were provided, and the two readers agreed in their coding 100% of the time.

The readers used the transcribed data to rate the occurrence of each one of the ten writing components of argument and the extent to which a teacher followed *principled practice*. In order to separate the data, a code of 1-10 (elements of *principled practice* and components of the Toulmin model) was assigned for each of the components to correlate with the numbers on the observational rubric. Each time a writing component occurred the reader would tally it on the observational rubric, highlight, and number it in the transcribed data. Both readers discussed and agreed 100% of the time, upon the tallies of each component for each teacher observed.

Once the transcribed data had been coded and recorded on the rubric and checked for consistency, I analyzed the data from the rubric, which revealed common themes. Each classroom teacher observed was analyzed according to how s/he approached writing instruction and interviews revealed evidence of attention to the components of argument and *principled practice*, the type of writing instruction that research suggests offers the most promise in teaching argument writing (Smagorinsky, 2009).

Validity and Reliability of the Qualitative Phase

In order to ensure the rigor of the data presented in a qualitative study, the researcher must carry out the study in an ethical manner. Merriam (2009) asserts that one must pay careful attention to "the way in which the data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted, and the way in which the findings are presented" (p. 210). In qualitative research the concepts of validity and reliability are referred to as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Merriam, 2009). The following sections will discuss how I established

credibility, transferability, and dependability to ensure the trustworthiness of my qualitative data.

Credibility

According to Merriam (2009), credibility or internal validity posits that "research hinges on the meaning of reality" (p. 213). Therefore, in the case of qualitative research, the "reality" is the data presented. In order to evaluate the data in this study, two strategies were used: member checks and triangulation of data.

Member checks require the researcher to verify findings with the participants from their study (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Mertens, 2010). I completed member checks by asking my participants to verify my interpretation of the interviews and observations. Specifically, the teachers were emailed copies of the dictated interviews and observations so that they could comment in writing.

Triangulation of data involves the collection of multiple sources of data from several individuals (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Merriam, 2009; Mertens, 2010). Interviews and observations were compared and cross-checked in order to establish consistency across the data.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which research can be applied to another researcher's study based on similarities and differences. The responsibility for the transfer relies more on the person seeking to use the data elsewhere than the original researcher

(Merriam, 2009). Therefore, I have provided a "thick description" of the data in order to make transferability possible (Merriam, 2009; Mertens, 2010). In this study I have composed detailed descriptions of participants, time, setting, and results, so that readers can apply these results to their own research or setting.

Dependability

Dependability of qualitative research is determined by how consistent the results of the research are with the data collected (Merriam, 2009). In order to determine the dependability of this study, the researcher utilized peer examination. Two peer examiners were employed; both were doctoral students in the same field of study.

Limitations

The time frame of this study is a limitation, as data were being collected while some schools are just beginning to "unpack" the standards for CCSS. This study focuses on the preparedness of teachers in teaching argument; some teachers may not even have been exposed to the expectations of argument in the CCSS. An additional limitation is the size of the sample, which is limited to teachers in suburban schools in the Chicago area. The teachers and the schools may not be representative of schools across the state.

Conclusion

This study employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design in order to answer the research questions. The research was conducted in two phases: a quantitative

phase, which employed a survey, and a qualitative phase that relied on interviews and observations. The results of these data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods, and several procedures were used to insure validity and reliability of the obtained data. The results of this research are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study which proposed to examine: how prepared middle school teachers were to teach argument in the middle school classroom. The main objective of the study was to determine how Common Core State Standards regarding argument were being interpreted and implemented by teachers in the middle school classroom. The respondents and participants are described, and research questions are reviewed and discussed.

Demographics of Survey Respondents

As stated in Chapter 3, the survey was sent to approximately 200 teachers in 11 middle schools in the Chicago area in spring, through SurveyMonkey. A response rate of 17% was achieved with a total of 34 teachers who responded to the survey with 26 teachers completing the survey in its entirety. Table 4 provides a summary of the years of experience and years of experience in current grade level among the study participants.

Table 4

Years of Experience

Years	Years of Teaching Experience	Years of Teaching in Current Grade Level
0-5	12% N = 3	27% N = 7
6-10	27% N = 7	38% N = 10
11-15	35% N = 9	15% N = 4
16-20	19% N = 5	15% N = 4
21-25	0% N = 0	0% N = 0
25+	8% N = 2	4% N = 1

Additionally, respondents were asked what primary subject they taught. The primary subjects that respondents taught can be found in Figure 3.

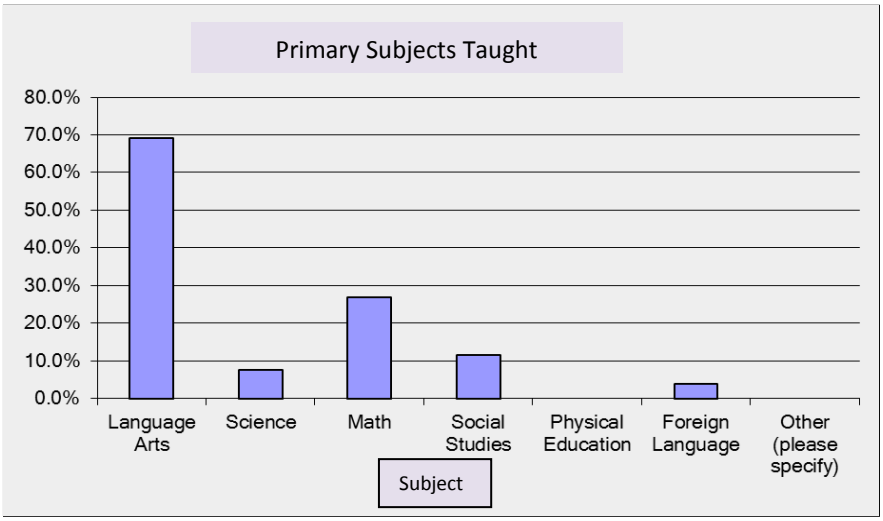

Figure 3: Primary subjects taught by respondents (Source: Survey Monkey).

Demographics of Participants

Chapter 3 provides a narrative of the four respondents, Annie, Beth, Chris, and Debbie, who agreed to become further participants in the study. All four participants granted me access to their individual survey responses. All demographic data is included in Table 5.

Table 5

Demographic Data of Participants

Name of Participant	Number of years Teaching	Current Grade Level	Number of Years Teaching at Current Grade Level	Subject Taught	Professional Development in Teaching Argument
Annie	11-15	Seventh Grade	11-15	Language Arts	None
Beth	11-15	Eighth Grade	11-15	Language Arts	None
Chris	11-15	Seventh Grade	11-15	Language Arts	None
Debbie	16-20	Multiple Grades (7 & 8)	6-10	Language Arts	None

Data Analysis by Research Question

Research Question One

The first research question examined what teachers report knowing about teaching argument. In phase one, the quantitative phase, most of the questions on the survey were aimed at gathering data for this research question. In phase two, the qualitative phase, both participant interviews and observations were analyzed in order to gain further insight into this question.

RQ1: What do teachers report that they know about how to teach argument in their classroom?

Quantitative Survey Results

The first question on the survey asked respondents if they had received any professional development in the area of argument. While most respondents (n = 19) never received any professional development in the area of argument, 27% (n = 7) have received some professional development in argument. Respondents were then asked to rate the degree of confidence they had in teaching argument in their subject area. Only 38% of teachers were very confident to confident. Most respondents (62%) were somewhat confident to not confident.

The next four questions on the survey asked respondents to rate each response in varying degrees from *Strongly Agree* to *Don't Know*. A summary of these results appear in Table 6.

Table 6

Survey Questions Regarding Knowledge of Argument

Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know
Argument and persuasion are related but not synonymous terms.	27% n = 7	69% n = 18	0% n = 0	4% n = 1	0% n = 0
Argument necessarily refers to a competitive, or even combative, exchange between speakers.	0% n = 0	31% n = 8	4% n = 1	61% n = 16	4% n = 1
The term argument necessarily implies that there will be a winner and a loser.	4% n = 1	13% n = 3	8% n = 2	75% n = 18	0% n = 0
An argument refers to a logical unit of thought.	23% n = 6	73% n = 19	0% n = 0	4% n = 1	0% n = 0

An additional four questions were asked regarding research question one. These four questions referred to components of argument, which teachers should know if they are teaching argument. Table 7 summarizes these data.

Table 7

Survey Questions Regarding the Knowledge of the Characteristics of a Solid Argument

Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know
A solid argument would provide evidence (i.e. data, information) to support claims.	81% *n* = 21	19% *n* = 5	0% *n* = 0	0% *n* = 0	0% *n* = 0
A solid argument would recognize and evaluate competing points of view.	73% *n* = 19	27% *n* = 7	0% *n* = 0	0% *n* = 0	0% *n* = 0
A solid argument would reveal limitations or qualifications to claims.	58% *n* = 15	27% *n* = 7	0% *n* = 0	15% *n* = 4	0% *n* = 0
A solid argument would involve the recognition of rules, laws, or principles to interpret the relevance and significance of information.	50% *n* = 13	38% *n* = 10	0% *n* = 0	0% *n* = 0	12% *n* = 3

Qualitative Interviews and Observations

This section describes the results from the interview data and from direct observations of four teachers in their classrooms. In Chapter 3, I report that the qualitative data were analyzed using inter-coder agreement. For this purpose, two doctoral students were selected to analyze the data; they will be referred throughout this chapter as the readers. Table 8 details their analysis of key writing components using the Argument Writing Observational Rubric.

Table 8

Presence of Key Writing Components in Participants' Lessons

Writing Component	**Annie**	**Beth**	**Chris**	**Deb**
1. The teacher emphasizes attention to **claims** in argument writing (drawing conclusions, assertions, generalizations, etc.).	7	2	2	3
2. The teacher emphasizes **evidence** in argument writing (support).	6	2	2	4
3. The teacher emphasizes **warrants** in argument writing (interpreting the evidence).	0	0	0	1
4. The teacher emphasizes attention to **rebuttals** or counter-arguments.	6	3	1	2
5. The teacher teaches composing **strategies** or **heuristics**, rather than formulas.	0	0	0	0
6. The teacher emphasizes writing as a **process**.	0	0	0	0
7. The teacher **scaffolds** instruction by building on prior knowledge and moving from simple to complex.	3	1	0	3
8. Instructional activities are **teacher-orchestrated** but **student-lead**.	0	0	0	0
9. The teacher represents writing as a socially mediated activity involving **purposeful peer interaction**.	2	0	0	1
10. The teacher builds in stages for **reflection** in the writing process.	0	0	0	1

*Each number represents the amount of times this component occurred in the data

Teacher Interviews. One theme that emerged, across all participants, is that they all expressed confidence in what they know about teaching argument. At the initial interviews, all four participants spoke of a clear plan of how they would implement their argument lessons. They all described their perspective of how argument is different from persuasion, and two of the four participants taught definitions for the various components of argument. For example, Beth showed her confidence in teaching argument by describing her method:

> Well my approach would be to remind the kids the difference between the argumentative and the persuasive papers, and then to go over the format, everything that needs to be included in the argument. The biggest focus, I think, is the difference between the persuasive and the argument is that they have to have the opposite side.

> They need to include both sides of the argument. And then we are going to do a session on pros and cons.

Next, Chris expressed confidence in teaching argument through debate: "Our approach is more of a debate approach as opposed to persuasion, using argument strategies instead of persuasion strategies. We've been using the terms such as counter-argument, rebuttal, claim, refute, qualify." Annie, like Chris, also started with debates as her method of teaching argument. Annie stated, "I'm going to start with debates and so that way they learn to argue and then counter-argue so that they can hear the opposing side." Annie also expressed confidence when describing the difference between argument and persuasion:

> It's similar to persuasive, except it has a counterclaim which is the opposite side because in persuasive you're just persuading. And this time you're just persuading or arguing but then you're saying why the other side is bad.

Finally, Debbie also conveyed confidence in teaching argument as a result of teaching argument in her classroom for three years. Like Annie and Chris, Debbie also teaches argument by starting with debates: "They love the debate part. They love sharing their opinions." When asked what evidence she has that students have grown as writers in the area of argument, Debbie explains, "I find that this helps them in any lit. [literature] analysis we do…I feel that their arguments in lit. analysis are much stronger because of this…" Debbie's confidence in teaching argument is again evident in her distinction between argument and persuasion. She describes her students' struggles to make this distinction: "I feel that most of the time that students are so stuck on persuasive, that they really don't understand the pieces that make it different." Debbie goes on to detail her lesson to illustrate how she has students make choices between two things, like virtues that distinguish between two hometown baseball teams. She then explains that this is opinion-based, and helps them to understand

that this is not argument, but persuasion. At this point students are able to come up with a definition of argument, and then the teacher gives them definitions for *claim*, *counter-claim*, *rebuttal*, *support*, *qualify*, and *refute*.

Teacher Observations. One theme that was obvious to the readers, which occurred with three of the four participants, was the misuse of the definitions associated with the components of argument. The readers both used the reference sheet (Appendix I) to verify how Toulmin defined the various components of argument. The readers cited that some of the vocabulary, when being used in context, was different from what was being taught explicitly. For example, Chris taught her students about the following vocabulary: *claim*, *support*, *counter-claim*, *rebuttal*, and *refute*. Students were shown this vocabulary via a Power-Point presentation and wrote the definitions for each in their notebooks. When Chris taught the lesson I observed, a lesson designed to engage students in debate, the terminology she used with the students was completely different. When asking them to come up and present their claim on an issue she said, "We gave you a stance. That's the stance that you have to take whether in real life you agree with it or not." Throughout the entire lesson she continued to refer to the "claim" as the "stance." Once the debates were finished, Chris had them begin their argument papers. Their claim was to be based on a charity that the students thought was most deserving of a donation. As she started them working on their essay, she refers to the claim as the "main idea":

> Okay, so you have about seven minutes or so, you can at least start with your main idea as long as you did your homework last night and picked your charity. Start with your main idea on what charity you think should deserve the most money.

Beth likewise referred to the claim as "the stand" while modeling an existing argument essay with her students:

> So what is the stand? How do we feel about this? How does the reader feel about this? You should use cell phones or you should not use cell phones in a classroom? (*Student answers*) Should not, okay. We should not, that's the stand…

Later in the lesson Beth used the word "claim," but she was not consistent throughout her lesson in the use of this word. While there are terms synonymous with the term *claim*, the switching across several terms could be confusing for the students, because at no point in any of the teachers' lessons did they make a distinction.

Chris also taught her students about counter-claim, but when students presented their debates she referred to the counter-claim as either the affirmative or the negative.

> Just remember when you come up here, we're going to start with the affirmative side. You'll say "this is my stance, this is my first reason…" and then the negative side we'll come back with their rebuttal, then you guys go back and forth.

It became clear that this was very confusing for the students. Instead of asking the students to come up and present their claims while the other student provided a counter-claim, the students were asked to present their stance on an issue, offering one side as affirmative and the other as negative. The confusion for one student, Joe, is evident when he is supposed to be presenting the counter-argument to Susan's claim of more school lunch choices.

> Susan: I think there should be more choices for school lunches.
>
> Joe: Well there could be allergies and (inaudible).
>
> Susan: That's not the school's fault. Well, they should provide more healthy choices then they wouldn't have to worry about waiting in line and then they could just pick whatever they want.
>
> Joe: I was confused. I'm confused?

> Teacher: Susan can you restate your point.
>
> Susan: If the school provides more healthier choices then the kids can choose what they want and then they stand in line and they say yes or no.
>
> Joe: Oh, I get my point. I'm negative right? Confused. (teacher tries to help him). I'm still confused.

To confuse matters further, Chris calls the claim "your point" instead of "stance" as she had called it earlier.

The readers also noticed that many teachers substituted the word *reasons* for *evidence*, which blurs the distinction between a reason as a claim, a reason as support for a claim (why someone holds a position), or reason as an entire argument in support of a proposition or over-arching claim. While Beth is teaching her students about the body of the argument paper she discusses the focus of reasons in the paper.

> Each body paragraph is going to focus on one reason only, one reason, and you are going to support it. So in your paragraph you are going to include a topic sentence. Then you are going to include evidence. Now, your evidence, and I want you to write this in here, is going to be an example, because we are not technically doing this as a research based argument. You're going to be responding on a prompt. I do want you to use examples, your evidence to support how you feel. If you know a fact, wonderful! We're not going to have this data because we're not going to have time in class to do this research. So yours is going to be how you feel, but also examples.

While Beth does have students focus on one reason and follow it up with evidence, the evidence, she implies, does not have to be fact-based rather it will be based on "how you feel," which is a possible approach to persuasion, with reasons based on unsupported opinion and not on information, examples, or testimony in this argument paper. Beth claims that this is not a "research based argument," since they do not have the time for the research.

Chris, similarly, uses the term *reasons* to include opinions and not researched data or information.

> Start with your main idea on what charity you think should deserve the most money. Then you could probably come up with your reasons, hopefully you looked into it a little further instead of just finding the title of something. Okay, you can put your reasons. You might need to wait until you find like some specific evidence to back up those reasons.

Chris tells the students to start with the charity "you think should deserve the most money," and then come up with reasons. Once again this is opinion-based which is more characteristic of persuasion than argument. While Chris does advise them to "find, like, some specific evidence to back up those reasons," she does not explain what specific evidence is, nor does she emphasize support for reasons as something that is important to have in the argument paper.

Both Annie and Debbie explained reasons as evidence in which you need "provable" facts. They both emphasized research and the credibility of the research, all components of argument writing. However, Debbie mainly focused her instruction on the pathos, or the emotions in an argument. In order for her students to prepare for a lesson on argument writing about year-round school she asked them to "…go home and mentally prepare yourself for your opinions and ideas about year-round school, and no homework, and come ready tomorrow to meet with your group and share some of those thoughts." Clearly, reasons for either of those arguments are not based on facts or data; rather they are opinions that students held about each topic, although they might be opinions grounded in some information, including their own experience in school for many years.

Summary

The data from the survey reveal several themes about teachers' awareness of teaching argument in the classroom. First, most teachers respond that they have an awareness of what argument is, but most are not confident in teaching argument. Another theme is that most teachers, while expected to teach argument in the classroom according to CCSS, have never had any professional development in this area. The analysis of the interviews of all four participants and the classroom observations, revealed much about how prepared teachers are to teach argument in the middle school classroom. In contrast to the survey, the readers initially noted that all participants, during their first round of interviews, were confident in their plans for teaching argument. However, it was clear during the observations that most participants were not consistent with the use of argument vocabulary, which could possibly be confusing to their students.

Research Question Two

Research question two involves the awareness that teachers have about how well they understand argument as it is intended in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). In phase one, the quantitative phase only three questions on the survey aligned with this research question. The data from both teacher interviews and observations address the following research question:

RQ 2: How do middle school teachers' approaches to teaching argument align with the conception of argument envisioned by the Common Core State Standards?

Quantitative Survey Results

Three final questions on the survey were aimed at what teachers know about argument as it is intended in the CCSS. A summary of these data appears in Table 9.

Table 9

Survey Questions Regarding Argument in the CCSS

Survey Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Don't Know
The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) emphasize the teaching of argument.	42% *n* = 11	42% *n* = 11	0% *n* = 0	4% *n* = 1	12% *n* = 3
The CCSS acknowledges that argument is a means for arriving at understanding of complex texts and ideas.	19% *n* = 5	62% *n* = 16	0% *n* = 0	4% *n* = 1	15% *n* = 4
The CCSS suggest that argument is a key way of thinking for students' academic and career success.	15% *n* = 4	62% *n* = 16	0% *n* = 0	12% *n* = 3	12% *n* = 3

A final question on the survey asked *would you agree to participate in further research?* Most respondents (n = 22) answered *no*, but four respondents answered *yes* and agreed to participate further, providing their emails so that they could be contacted with additional information. These four respondents were contacted via email, and agreed to become participants and allow me to gather further data for the qualitative phase of this research.

Qualitative Interviews and Observations

This section analyzes teacher interviews and classroom observations for common themes that developed.

Teacher Interviews. During both the initial interview and the follow-up interview after the observation, the readers identified one theme that emerged; the notion of "fitting in" argument writing before state testing. The state testing in Illinois is based on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Previous standards in Illinois required teachers to teach persuasion not argument; but since argument is a form of writing emphasized in CCSS, teachers are now responsible for making this adjustment to their writing curriculum. In my initial interview with Annie, she had mentioned that she believes that she and one other language arts teacher were the only teachers in the entire school teaching argument:

> We've had teachers say that unless we know for sure that it's on PARRC we're not going to change it cause we're teaching what we've been teaching. Even though the two of us are, like, "'It's on the PARCC!"' and I did the PARRC last year, the practice, and IT'S ON THERE! So we have to teach it, and teach it right the first year, going forward. So there's still a lot of that old belief of not changing anything.

In the follow up interview, I asked her what she thought her other language arts colleagues were teaching if not argument. She explained, "They're waiting to see if it's true [if argument will be on the state test]. I think that they'll do what I did last year, which is kind of just stuck it in at the end." Annie was the only participant that I observed in the fall. The remaining three participants I observed in the spring, during state testing.

During the initial interview with Beth, she expressed that she was a bit nervous about how fast paced the argument writing unit was:

> It's kind of fast, and I'm a little nervous about it, but I'm trying to fit it in [before PARCC]. But I think they'll get it. Sometimes with the eighth graders they work better when it's like "this has to be done!"

In Beth's follow-up interview she explained that she would not be doing any more argument writing with her students. Chris also taught her students their first argument writing essay during state testing. When asked how long the entire process would take she replied, "Three

to four weeks from start to when they turn in their final essay. I don't know, we have so many other things going on [PARCC testing] that we do it one day, don't do it another." Chris also revealed that this would be the only argument essay they would complete during the year. While Debbie did teach argument during state testing, she was the only participant who did not mention trying to "fit in" argument writing for the state testing.

Teacher Observations. All four teachers observed were aware of the standards for argument writing in the CCSS, and all four had begun to make the transition from persuasive writing to argument writing. However the readers became aware of one theme that developed regarding the alignment of argument writing according to CCSS. The readers noticed that three of the four teachers, while intending to teach argument, were still teaching persuasion as if this were a form of writing indistinguishable from argument.

Debbie began her argument writing lesson by explaining the components of argument, and students wrote the definitions for each component on a note sheet. She also defined the following three words for the students: "*Ethos*-establishing your knowledge or credibility, *Logos*-using logic, facts, and figures/hard data to support your claim, and *Pathos*-connecting to your reader/audience on an emotional level." She then went into very detailed instruction with her students for the next two days, in which she attempted to separate persuasion from argument. Debbie did make the distinction between using emotions in persuasion and putting the emotion into your argument; however, the distinction was not very clear as she focused most of the lesson on pathos. At one point she asked the students, "What's wrong or what's the fault with an argument based on emotion?" While several students responded simultaneously and in a way that was hard to distinguish one from the

other, the teacher interpreted the responses and stated: "The facts get lost." But then she continued: "Can you be passionate or emotional about your argument? Yes you can, but what do you need to make sure that you include…you need to make sure that you get back to facts." She then had students watch several commercials which she stated "pulled at the heart strings," and then they had to decide what the pathos was in the commercial. For homework, Debbie had them watch commercials; "I want you to watch a couple of commercials, and I want you to give us the name of the product, and I want you to tell me, did it appeal to you?"

The following day the students are asked to analyze Patrick Henry's "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death" speech for its ethos, logos, and pathos. Debbie then asked her students what Patrick Henry is focusing on in his speech.

> So are we basing this mostly on logic or emotion (students are split between the two) Oh I'm hearing discerning takes here. How many of you, thumbs up, think it's more about the emotion, the pathos? Eight. How many of you are on the logos, the logic part? Do I have anybody that's logmotion, logic and emotion together?

The class was split on whether this speech appeals most to emotions or reason. It's clear that half of the students in the class are stuck on the emotion in the speech, which is one persuasive element. To further confuse her students, Debbie makes up a new word "logmotion," which she offered as a cross between logic and emotion.

Chris instructed her students to write their argument paper on a charity of their choosing, as stated previously. As she guided her class through the outline of the paper she came to the conclusion and explained to her students why this is the most important part of the entire paper:

> All right and then there's that part on the bottom that says "strong finish" we talked before. We talked multiple times, it's important to end your paper with a really strong finish. So start coming up with something creative to "hook" your reader in,

> not something like "you're really upset that the essay is over." This part is super important. It would probably be good when you're outlining something because when you are presenting it to us for your speech, this part is going to be really important, it's what you're going to leave your audience with. So you really want to grab their attention and want them to give up our money to your charity. It's kind of like the last thing we hear from you. If you watch commercials, the last thing you hear from them is going to be the strongest hook so it will get you to buy their car. So keep that in mind as you're writing your conclusion.

Chris advised her students to persuade the reader to want to donate to their charity. The entire conclusion emphasizes persuasion, through emotional appeals instead of appeals to reason, which would be more aligned with the CCSS conception of argument.

Beth's entire lesson focused on persuasion. She reported that she did not have time for emphasizing a key element of argument: validating the reasoning by providing appropriate evidence for the claim. She admitted several times that they did not have time for research and that this paper was not a "research-based argument." CCSS standard one for writing notes: "Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence" (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2010, p. 41). According to this description of a learning target, argument requires the thinker to support claims with relevant data and to interpret that data to show the connection to the claim. Beth, however, allowed her students to justify a position by expressing unsupported claims and sharing how they "felt" about a topic. This is evident when she assigns them a task in which they are to take a look at six statements, choose a side for each, and then write three pros and three cons for each of the six statements:

> Take a look at the first one, it says "Should college athletes get paid for their services?" You have to choose a side, obviously. How do you really feel about this? You're not only choosing a side, you're going to give me three great reasons why they should, and three equally great reasons why you think they should not. You're

> doing this for all six of these topics. Some may hit a little closer to home, some you may not have that much of a connection with, but I want you to work to come up with three pros and three cons for each one of them. You need to do this on your own because this is how you feel.

Beth advises her students to "choose a side," which sets the students up for persuasion rather than argument, from the onset of the task. She also states twice that this is all about how "they feel" about a particular topic. Moreover, she tells them that they need to complete this task on their own because it is based on "how you feel." These tasks were assigned to the students to complete before they individually wrote their argument papers on one of these topics. Finally, one of the most significant issues is that the teacher assumes that students possess knowledge of each one of these subjects. The type of knowledge that Beth is expecting of her students' needs to be well researched, which the students did not have time for, so they are to just come up with something.

Summary

The data from the survey revealed that most teachers seem to have an awareness of what argument is; however, there still seems to be some confusion about making a distinction between *argument* and *persuasion*. This last finding suggests that while teachers report that they understand that argument holds a "special place" in the CCSS and therefore the teachers have an obligation to teach argument, they have little formal training in teaching of argument in the way the architects of the Common Core and the authorities they cite conceive of argument. Results from the survey seem to align with the interview and observation data from the participants, in that middle school teachers claim to understand what argument is all about, yet they have little preparation for teaching the concept of argument. It was obvious

to the readers that while teachers claimed they understood argument as stated in CCSS, most participants' instruction revealed that they were still equating argument with persuasion. It was also evident to the readers that most of the participants were motivated to teach argument as a means to satisfy the requirements of the up-coming state testing and the requirements of CCSS.

Research Question Three

This section explores what teachers know about *principled practice* in the teaching of writing when they attempt to teach students to write arguments. Qualitative data were obtained through teacher interviews and classroom observations to address this question.

RQ 3: How do middle school teachers' approaches to the teaching of writing argument reveal what they know about *principled practices* in the teaching of writing?

Teacher Interviews

Both readers utilized the reference sheet in order for them to find common themes when analyzing the interviews of all four participants. One theme that continually occurred was the absence of the last component of *Principled Practice*; *the teacher builds in stages for reflection in the writing process*. The idea here is to foster an awareness of the processes that students followed in order to complete their compositions. In each interview after the observation(s), I asked each participant if students were given an opportunity for reflection upon completion of the essay or during the process of writing argument. Most participants

misinterpreted reflection as teacher feedback and student revision. Only Debbie understood and incorporated reflection throughout her argument instruction.

When I asked Debbie how she incorporated reflection into her argument lesson, she explained her conception of reflection:

> Once they get their rubric from me they are actually able to make corrections and I will reconsider it. So even though they have done what they think is their final edit and they've got their check-off peer eval sheet, and they're turning it in. I evaluate it and then they are allowed to make corrections and then I will apply those corrections to their grades.

Teacher feedback and student revision might involve reflection, but this is distinct from a stage in which a learner reflects on the procedures for composing. However, Debbie went on to explain how students complete a reflection sheet:

> After that they fill out a reflection sheet, and it's a 3 "things that I did really well," 3 "things I'm most proud of," 2 "things I think I could've done better," and 1 "question I have about my process." it's usually like a little 3-2-1 reflection.

This is reflection, as students are thinking about their own learning. Also, during both observations, Debbie was the only participant who incorporated reflection throughout her instruction. Before each lesson, Debbie asked students what they learned the previous day, as well as having students reflect upon their learning at the conclusion of instruction.

> All right, who can wrap it up in two sentences what we introduced today? Whose got two sentences that can introduce what we talked about today? Think about it, ponder it. What do you got? (student answers) Can you connect something personal to that? I love your first statement but can you add one little personal piece that you found out about us?

During the second interview with Annie, Beth and Chris, I asked them all the same question about the use of reflection upon completion, and during the process of argument writing. All three participants had similar responses, as they all interpreted reflection as

teacher feedback and student revision. Annie had this to say in response to the interview question:

> I would say today was the first time to really reflect because they were able to highlight and see if anything was missing. Then they were kind of forced that they had to do a revision. They had to find words that they like, or they could change the "saids" and the "wases" the "weres" or "where." So a lot of them were like, "this doesn't make sense to me" or "I'm not sure what this was." So I make them do it all, strictly by themselves today, as far as "I don't know what the claim is?" So then I tell them "well you need to go look it up in your notes because I'm not going to tell you what your claim is in that paper." Well, I think they might have just highlighted. But I did have a few come up and say, "I don't have this at all. How do I add this back in?" That's what I'm looking for. I'm not grading you if you missed it now. You don't get graded until the end. It's completion grades.

Annie had students correct and revise their papers to make sure that all of the components of argument were included. Students also needed to make grammatical corrections. This is editing and not reflection. Beth considered revision of the argument paper, reflection of the argument process. When posed with the same question she answered:

> What I did was, once I grade these I return them and they are able to see the comments. I did give them the option of re-submitting it to me if they wanted to make changes. I actually had three people re-submit.

Chris also equated reflection as revision. When asked the same question about reflection Chris replied, "Well, probably when they come up here for editing when we say, 'Would you re-write this? What's your plan for this? What are you still looking for, for this?'"

One additional theme that was evident during interviews concerning research question three, was the use of peer editing. Another component of *principled practice* is that; *the teacher represents writing as a socially mediated activity involving purposeful peer interaction*. This component involves the use of peer editing and student interaction during the writing process. With the exception of one participant, this component was not observed.

Therefore, I composed a second interview question to inquire if peer editing involving purposeful peer interaction occurred during the writing process.

While I did observe social interaction in Debbie's classroom, I also asked at our second interview if her students were involved in any peer editing during the writing process. Debbie explained that she requires her students to do a very thorough inventory process of their papers with a partner. Students have a chart that they complete in reference to their partner's paper. I asked her if the students are able to discuss these findings.

> Yes, partner reads the paper aloud to them, then they read it silently with their check-off page, and then they open it up for discussion. They make comments and discuss, they even comment on things if they agree or disagree, and then we have a conference at our tables with the group. They can open it up for 'Well my editor says I don't have this but I'm seeing it here. What do we think about that? What else could we add to make it better?'

In this classroom, students are working together to edit and revise as well as engage in discussions during the writing process. Both peer and student conferences are conducted during this process.

Annie has a very thorough edit/revision process as well, but it is not socially mediated. For example, students do not have the opportunity to discuss the edits they make in their partner's paper. In addition, students are asked to highlight all of the components of argument in their own papers such as claim, counter claim, evidence, and supports. They are also asked to find words to revise and change. Finally, they will create a clean copy from those revisions. Annie states that at the next class meeting each student will have a clean second rough draft for editing:

> Then they will exchange [with a partner] that rough draft, and I pretty much have the students go through again with the highlighting, and they'll highlight what they think

> the counter claim is, and the elaboration, and everything. So that way the person knows if a reader is going to see if something's missing, plus they will circle anything that is misspelled.

The students are then handed back their essays, but there is no discussion about the components of the argument paper: the *claim*, *counter-claim*, or *evidence*. It is purely for editing and revision based on some general notions about what constitutes quality writing.

I asked Beth about peer editing, because she had mentioned peer editing to her students during the lesson I observed. She shared that once students had completed their essays, she gave them a rubric and explained what they were supposed to be looking for in the essay. Beth noted this process: "Then they traded papers with two people and they went through and, using the rubric, actually graded the paper. I think they took it pretty seriously, which was kind of nice for a change." She went on to explain that once the papers were graded, students simply handed the essays back to their partners, with the graded rubric attached. There was no discussion of the rubric. Once again, this is an example of editing. It is not an example of a socially mediated activity in which students are discussing, exchanging ideas, and creating meaning to improve their writing.

Chris eliminated the peer editing process all together. She explained that since the students were putting their essays into a speech format and practicing with each other, this took the place of peer editing, revision, and discussion throughout the writing process.

> We're doing a speech that is an outline of their argument, where they're pulling the most important pieces and putting them into speech format of their essays. So they get a mock speech with each other, and they were instructed to give constructive feedback. So we're hoping that any feedback they got for their speech, they would apply it to their essay because it's the same exact material. It's just the speech is less…they're not reading their whole essay. It's an outline of their essay.

Chris "hopes" that the students will utilize the feedback that they may receive from their peers during their mock speech, and make revisions to their essay. However, the essay is already completed, and the teacher gave the students no explicit directions to revise or edit.

Teacher Observations

Once again, the readers utilized the reference sheet to understand how writing instruction aligned with *principled practice* differs from other types of writing instruction such as the *presentational approach*, *general process approach*, and the *structured process approach*. As discussed previously in Chapter 3, the *presentational approach* to writing instruction is the most widely recognized, but least effective at teaching the process of writing (Smagorinsky, 2009). While analyzing teacher observations, the most evident theme to emerge was that participants were not utilizing *principled practice* in their writing instruction. Rather, their preferred method was the *presentational approach*.

One component of *principled practice* is that *instructional practices are teacher-orchestrated but student-led*. In other words, teachers design the instruction to be engaging and involve student-led discussion. Both Beth's and Anna's entire writing lessons were teacher-led, with very little student interaction. The readers commented that both participants dominated the instruction. Both readers tallied the times that Beth asked her students if they had any questions, and students had none. There was almost no student interaction in Beth's class; instead, Beth led the entire lesson, instructing throughout the whole 45-minute observation:

> All right, any questions on the intro? (no questions). All right, we're going to move on then.
>
> So questions on the body paragraph? (none).

> Okay, do I have any questions on the introduction? (none) Do I have any questions on the counterclaim, or body paragraph? (none).
>
> I do need it finished by the time you come back tomorrow. Questions? (none) Okay.

Annie has more interaction with her students, but it is mainly recall questions that students are asked. As in the following exchange:

> Who remembers what the opposing claim was? (Calls on student) Absolutely!
>
> What does that mean to stay focused? And what would you be paying attention to in the body paragraph? (Calls on student).
>
> When you take somebody else's work, what is that? (Calls on student).

Annie also tries to get her students involved by having them share their work, but there are no discussions about the work, it is just for sharing purposes. Annie stated,

> All right, opposing claims, anyone want to share their opposing claim? (No one responds so teacher draws a stick with a student's name on it but that student declines to share. She then calls on another student and he declines as well). Okay, I'm concerned that no one wants to read their opposing claims (One student does share and then the teacher calls on several more students to share. One student is offered feedback, reminding her not to forget to make it evident that it is an opposing position. The teacher continues to call on most all of the other students for the next 10 minutes).

In this instance, students are forced to share their work; only one student willingly shared her opposing claim. Others were reluctant to share until prodded by the teacher to do so. She provided very minimal feedback to one student that shared her opposing claim. In this classroom, instruction is clearly teacher-led with very little student involvement.

Debbie's classroom has a lot more student interaction and discussion, but readers felt that she also dominated the lesson making it more teacher-driven. While

she had students discuss Patrick Henry's speech on the second day of observation, the readers felt that the majority of the two-day observation was Debbie talking to the students. The readers also observed that the lesson Chris taught was mainly teacher-dominated. Even though it featured opportunities for student interaction, not all students were expected to be engaged in the lesson, if they were still working on their vocabulary. Chris told them, "Okay, we'll start our debates, and if you are still working on your vocab that's fine. Just continue to work on your vocab and listen to the debates." Furthermore, students were expected to engage in debates in front of the entire class even if they were not prepared. Chris addressed her class:

> Okay, let's have the next debate. The affirmative side is video games are harmful for teenagers and the negative side is video games are not harmful to teenagers. (Student says he is not prepared). Oh, well you can just come up and wing it! A lot of people yesterday didn't even use their sheets, like, they just listened to the first person's reason. I mean you would have a good idea of what was on there, okay? That's all right, come up, I have faith in you.

Also, when a student becomes confused about what he is debating the teacher tries to help him:

> Well, you're saying that there could be longer lines because it could take more time. With a lot of choices, it will take more time for the students to choose because if they have lots of things, then they can't decide which one they want. That's what you're saying, right?

At this point, Chris is leading the student to this answer. He had no idea what his counter-argument was, but she provides one for him to move the debate along. At no point in the student debates did students have the opportunity to discuss the debates. Chris simply declared that the students had done a "good job!" and provided no other feedback except at some points to summarize what was said.

Additionally, most of the participants used models and formulas to teach their students argument writing. In instruction that remains true to *principled practice, the teacher teaches composing strategies or heuristics, rather than formulas*. Both Annie and Beth taught their argument writing lesson from a packet that they had purchased on *Teachers Pay Teachers*, an online store that features teacher-created instructional materials. Students followed along with the packet and the modeled writing that was in the packets. The models were to offer examples for their own argument essays. Beth had her students ready with their argument packets and several highlighters of varying colors:

> Flip it (*the packet*) over and you have a student example of an introductory paragraph. If you have highlighters or colored pencils, I want you to take those out now. We're going to make sure that you are highlighting each part of this, so that when you are writing your own you can look back at it. So let's take a look at this example paragraph.

Beth then read, word-for-word, the paragraph in the packet, and then conducted an in-depth analysis of the components of the paragraph. This occurs with the entire example essay.

Annie's approach was very similar to Beth's, although her students were following along as she modeled how to compose an essay, much like the one in the packet that she provided:

> Okay, I am going to write an argumentative paper at the same time you guys are, but I'm picking a different topic, so that way you can't copy all of my ideas. So I am writing a paper on the school year should be extended. I'm going to show you [how to do it] through my paper.

Annie introduced her paragraph, explained it to the learners, and then had them write their own introduction, but on a different topic. She continued in this manner throughout the entire essay.

All four participants, at some point during their instruction, had students engage in some sort of debate, although each seemed very disconnected from the process of argument writing. Chris had her students engage in debate, which most were not prepared to engage in, as an activity prior to writing their argument paper. Immediately following the debates, Chris had her students take out their argument essay graphic organizers: "All right, now that you got some practice verbally, were going to start on your graphic organizers. I really, really, really, hope that you did some research on the charity you picked." She then explained the graphic organizer and how to fill it out:

> Now remember on the graphic organizer there are no complete sentences. These are all bulleted ideas. Jot it down; the complete sentences come later. This is where all your thoughts that are running around up there get thrown on paper. This is the beginning of the organizational process.

There was never an explanation or a discussion about how the debates connected to the argument paper other than, "now that you got some practice verbally." After a brief explanation of the counter-argument, students were then set to work on completing their graphic organizers. In a second interview, Chris reported that students used the graphic organizers, without further instruction, to complete their essays. While Chris had an "organizational process," there was no process for completing the steps to successfully write argument papers, and there was no connection between the debate activity and the argument essay. Instead, Chris relied on a graphic organizer, student's prior knowledge of how to write an essay, and some brief explanations of various parts of an argument paper, to teach her argument lesson.

The only participant who did not teach using a model was Debbie. Over two days of instruction, she implemented various activities to engage students. The set-up of the

classroom was conducive to student engagement as the 15 students, who were seated in groups of three to five, at one of the four round tables, were very comfortable speaking to one another. At one point, Debbie read the students a paragraph from Patrick Henry's *Give me Liberty or Give Me Death* speech. She then gave each table a separate paragraph from the same speech. Students were asked to analyze it and identify the claim, reasons, evidence, and counter-claim, as well as to discern if Patrick Henry established ethos, pathos, or logos. Students had a lively discussion with their tablemates as the teacher conferenced at separate tables. After about 15 minutes, students shared their thoughts on the analysis of their particular paragraph. Debbie also engaged the students in video analysis. She used video clips, such as one from *Toy Story* with Buzz Light Year and Woody having an argument. Debbie asked probing questions:

> I want you to think about that from the perspective of argument; first of all, that these two gentlemen's argument was based on fact and opinion, truth or feelings, what do we think? Does anyone have any verifiable information in here? (Student answers fact and opinion, and explains rationale for answer).

Debbie allowed students to engage in discussions with her, and with each other in their small table groups. However, as stated previously, Debbie lead most of the discussion and allowed minimal time for students to lead the discussions. Debbie chose the topic for their argument essay; all students had the same topic. Students then wrote the entire essay individually with no student interaction. However, students were able to interact and discuss their essays during the editing process.

Summary

Most of the teachers in this study did not deliver instruction aligned with *principled practice,* as described by Smagorinsky (2002, 2009) and then developed into six observable components, based on Boudreau Smith's (2012) review of 50 years of research about the teaching of writing. Instead, three of the four participants utilized the *presentational approach* to teach argument writing. These three participants did not engage their students in reflection, nor did students have the opportunity to engage in peer editing throughout the writing process, and none of the writing instruction was socially mediated. Three of the participants relied on models or graphic organizers for instruction rather than teaching strategies and heuristics. Additionally, all four participants led the instruction and did not give students opportunities to assume some leadership in any of the lessons. Debbie was the only participant to teach argument utilizing most of the components of *principled practice*.

The next chapter discusses the findings of each research question in detail. I also acknowledge the limitations of the study and discuss implications and recommendations for practice and future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine how prepared middle school teachers are to teach argument in the classroom. Specifically, this study focused on how much middle school teachers know about argument as it is represented in the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Additionally, the study determines if teachers are teaching argument in a way that is consistent with "principled practice"; that is, instructional practice that is consistent with the trends traced through a review of 50 years of research in the teaching of writing (Boudreau Smith, 2012).

This chapter includes a discussion of each research question, limitations of the study, implications, and recommendations for practice and future research.

Discussion of Research Question 1

The first research question explored how much middle school teachers report what they know about teaching argument in their classroom. Several questions on the survey solicited answers to this question. The most revealing findings from the survey responses were that most respondents had not received any professional development in the area of teaching argument, and that most did not have confidence in teaching argument. Applebee and Langer (2009) contend that when teachers experience professional development in the

area of reading and writing processes, they respond positively and are more aware of standards and their practicality. However, when questioned about various components of argument, most respondents' answers affirmed their knowledge of the components of argument.

The four participants that agreed to be interviewed and observed for this study revealed quite different results from that of the survey. While all four expressed confidence in teaching argument in their classroom, observations and interviews revealed a lack of knowledge in certain areas of teaching argument. It was evident in the interviews that all participants were confident, as they each mapped out a specific plan of how they would teach argument as well as explaining the difference between argument and persuasion. Not one of the participants had received any professional development in the area of teaching argument. Nevertheless, this did not deter them from feeling confident in revealing their plans and organization of their lessons. However, when implementation of activities or teaching of argument writing occurred, the use of argument components were inconsistent or were misinterpreted.

During observations, the most common component of argument to be misused was evidence (data). Smith et al. (2012) explain the term "data" (or evidence) as, "What makes something data is that it is evidence that is beyond dispute" (p. 13). Yet, for three of the participants, the word "evidence" was synonymous with reasons. While these terms are related, participants urged their students to use reasons associated with opinions or feelings. This is in opposition to the concept of evidence in argument, which needs to be validated with clear reasoning (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012, Hillocks, 2011,

Toulmin, 1958). The use of reasons as "opinions" is acceptable in CCSS, but only for K-5. Middle school-aged students are expected to use argument, beginning in sixth grade, which requires valid evidence (Common Core State Standards, Appendix A, 2010, p. 24).

The conceptual framework of this study relies on the works of Stephen Toulmin and the Toumin model (1958). Throughout this study, many researchers have been cited in support of the use of the Toulmin model as a basis for teaching and understanding argument (Berland & Reiser, 2008; Felton & Herko, 2004; Hillocks, 2010; McCann, 1989; McNeill, 2011; Newell, et al., 2011; Prusak, et al., 2012; Reznitskaya, et al., 2007). Prusak, et al. (2012), support the use of the Toulmin model as a "tool to describe argumentation," further they explain that it is currently being used "as a model for tracing the development of arguments in teaching/learning processes in classrooms" (p. 27). Hillocks (2010), in his explanation of how the Toulmin model is strongly connected to the teaching of argument, clarifies that a "good argument begins with looking at the data that are likely to become the evidence in an argument and that give rise to a thesis statement or major claim" (p. 26). Further, Hillocks claims that without an analysis of the data the claim "is likely to be no more than a preconception or assumption and, at worst, totally indefensible" (p. 26). In the Toulmin model, the argument begins with the data, the data helps to formulate a claim, and then it is used to support the claim as evidence, warrants and backing provide further support for the data.

According to Hillocks (2011), "Evidence, to be useful, must be relevant and verifiable" (p. xxii, preface). Yet the remaining three participants, allowed their students to use opinions as evidence. While some had implored their students to research their topic and

look for evidence, students were not advised as to what sites would be appropriate for their data collection. It was clearly acceptable for students to validate their evidence with feelings and opinions. One participant claimed that this argument essay "was not research based" as they did not have the time for collecting data.

Only one participant required her students to support their reasons with valid evidence. Smith et al. (2012) suggest various foci when instructing students on developing data for their claims; one focus is generating data. They advise that one common way to generate data is to inform students of the various websites that are available for this purpose. Annie's students were required to search for evidence to validate their reasons, on websites that had been pre-approved by her for credibility. In her lesson, Annie explained how the author of a modeled essay had found evidence to back up his reasoning, and then cited the author of that evidence. Throughout the lesson, Annie continually emphasized supporting reasons with valid evidence.

In summary, the majority of the teachers that were surveyed had no professional development in the area of argument, and were not confident in teaching argument writing to their middle school students. Three of the four participants, while expressing confidence in their knowledge of argument writing, were misinterpreting "evidence," a key component of argument in the Toulmin model. Newell et al. (2011), explain that one of the challenges in teaching argumentative reading and writing is that teachers have difficulty in explaining the rules of evidence, which they believe "lies at the heart of effective argumentation" (p. 277). Further, not one of the four participants had received professional development in teaching argument. The result was that while schools have adopted the Common Core State Standards

as learning targets, the school district did not provide the professional development to help teachers to appreciate the "special place for argument" and to teach argument as an essential tool for academic writing and for disciplinary thinking. The adoption of standards without the corresponding professional development support leaves to the discretion of the teacher how to interpret the concept of *argument* and to conceive of approaches to teaching it. If the four observed teachers are representative, the presumed rigor of the Standards is lost when teachers are not actually pursuing the Standards or are teaching toward Standards in a way that might actually undermine learners' understanding of what *argument* is.

Discussion of Research Question 2

Research question two investigated how middle school teachers' approaches to teaching argument align with the conception of argument envisioned by the Common Core State Standards. Three questions on the survey were dedicated to answering this question. The results show that the majority of respondents understand that CCSS emphasize the teaching of argument. They also understand that argument is a means to understand complex texts and ideas, as well as a key component to a student's academic and career success.

All four participants reported that they were well aware of the importance of argument in CCSS, but most were more concerned with argument writing as a component of the new 2015 state testing. Three out of the four participants taught argument as state testing was occurring in their school. They were more concerned about "fitting in" argument writing instruction before students were exposed to it on the state test, then they were at having it become a part of their classroom curriculum. The pressure to "fit in" writing is not

uncommon, as Applebee and Langer (2011) explain that most middle school teachers report that state testing is important in shaping curriculum and instruction.

Annie, who taught argument in the fall, believed that most of her colleagues were waiting to see if argument would be on the state test. She admitted that she had done the same the year before, as she "stuck it in" at the end of the year before her class was exposed to it on the pilot state testing. Applebee and Langer (2009), agree that external forces such as high-stakes testing are affecting the teaching of writing as teachers shift their attention "from a broad program of writing instruction toward a much narrower focus on how best to answer particular types of test questions" (p. 26). In Beth's class she taught her argument essay as the state testing was occurring. She was concerned about the fast pace of the argument writing lesson, as she did not have enough time to do a complete lesson or allow her students to do research for the evidence. An additional study by Applebee and Langer (2011) supports Beth's concerns about time constraints with teaching writing. They posit that "competing priorities" such as state testing, take away from time spent on classroom writing instruction. Consequently, they conclude, this "does not augur well for the teaching of writing" (p. 17). Hillocks (2005) provides further support for the pressure of state testing, citing that even for affluent communities the pressure to raise test scores "has become paramount" and that, "too often, the quick fix in writing is some formula or other" (p. 244).

Another significant finding in this study was that teachers are still teaching persuasion as synonymous with argument. All respondents were well aware of the addition of argument writing as a genre in the CCSS. In interviews, all respondents stated how argument differed from persuasion. Yet, when they were observed, it was clear that three of the four

participants were still teaching persuasive writing and not argument writing. The key component of argument that most of these teachers were missing in their instruction, as stated previously, was the lack of use of valid evidence to support the claim. From a Toulmin (1958) perspective, *argument* is a form of logical reasoning. Persuasion can include appeals to logic, but also includes appeals to emotions and to ethical principles; argument can be a component of persuasion, but is not the same as persuasion. Further, Hillocks (2010) explains that argument relies on logic and reasoning. In contrast, the purpose of persuasive writing is to persuade; "you can select the most favorable evidence, appeal to emotions, and use style to persuade your readers. Your single purpose is be convincing" (p. 24). When I observed in Chris' classroom, her students engaged in debate with each other. Students were expected to be convincing and appeal to emotions on topics that they were passionate about such as video games, social media, and lunch choices. Their main purpose was to be convincing.

Lunsford, Ruszkiewicz, and Walters (2006) seek to clarify the distinction between argument and persuasion: "…the point of argument is to discover some version of the truth…the aim of persuasion is to change a point of view or to move others from conviction to action" (p. 8). In both Chris and Debbie's classrooms, their students were to seek out a charity that most deserved the money collected from the class. In both classrooms, students read excerpts from their argument essays in order to persuade their classmates that their chosen charity was the most deserving of the money. In the end, the class voted based on classmates' argument speeches, as to which charity was most deserving of the money. This

was clearly persuasion, as students changed their point of view from their own, to someone's they thought had the better argument for his/her charity.

This type of argument, according to George Hillocks (2011), would be an argument of judgment. Hillocks helps students achieve success in this type of argument "…by first helping them understand how to produce sound criteria for making those claims" (p. 42). The process is interactive and involves all students in the decision making. As a whole group, students are asked to generate a list of criteria for making judgments for a simple problem. Students all agree on each criterion. Students then use these criteria, individually or in a group, to solve a particular problem, such as the most suitable charity. Since the idea of a most worth charity can be nebulous, decision-makers must agree on a standard before they argue for a particular target. In formulating an argument, a speaker or writer would cite support that shows how a charity meets the standard. Neither Chris nor Debbie had their students generate a list of criteria for making judgments. Rather, students were left to their own individual judgments as to what would be an appropriate charity to give money to. Consequently, students relied on their own points of view, without regard to any shared standard as a rational basis for judgments.

Beth also engaged her students in debate prior to writing their argument essays. After instructing her students on how to write an argument essay, students were assigned to generate a list of three pros and three cons for each of six given topics. Students were then assigned to select one of these topics and use the pros and cons that they had composed as their evidence and counter-arguments. She emphasized that students should select pros and cons based on how they felt about the topic. Students were not allowed to collaborate, nor

was there any attempt to generate criteria for any of these problems such as, "should college athletes be paid?" Rather, once again, students were left to devise opinions that may or not be based on some rational standard.

Furthermore, Beth told her students that there would be no time for research, as this was not a "research-based argument." There is no such delineation in the CCSS of "research-based argument." Rather, CCSS advises that teachers teach argument based on relevant evidence. According to CCSS, sixth grade standard 1b for argument writing students are to "Support claim(s) with clear reasons and relevant evidence, using credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text." (Common Core State Standards, 2010, p. 42). In Appendix A of the Common Core State Standards (2012), the authors make a clear distinction between argument and persuasion. They explain that persuasion uses persuasive strategies such as "an appeal to the credibility, character or authority of the writer (speaker)" P. 24. Other strategies employed in persuasion are appealing "to the audience's self-interest, sense of identity, or emotions" (p. 24) in order to sway the audience. Consequently, a logical argument "convinces the audience because of the perceived merit and reasonableness of the claims and proofs offered" (p. 24). The explanation ends by stating that "the Standards place special emphasis on writing logical arguments" (p. 24). Therefore, without fostering the use of relevant evidence from a credible source, Beth was not teaching argument writing, according to the CCSS.

The significance of these themes is the lack of understanding of argument as it is envisioned in the CCSS. While teachers are aware that argument is part of the CCSS, they do

not fully comprehend what it is and how it should be taught. Rather they are repackaging persuasion, adding in the counter-claim, and calling it argument.

Discussion of Research Question Three

Research question three explored how middle school teachers' approaches to the teaching of writing argument reveal what they know about principled practices in the teaching of writing. There were no questions on the survey aimed at answering this question. However, data for this question were collected during interviews and observations of the four participants in this study.

When viewing the teaching of argument writing through the lens of *principled practice,* one significant finding was that teachers were teaching using a presentational approach that would be inconsistent with *principled practice*. A presentational approach is a teacher-dominated way of teaching writing. Goodlad (1984) calls this a "frontal" approach to teaching. The teacher dominates the talk in the classroom; and if the teacher uses models of compositions, she does all the analysis as students observe. The teacher emphasizes the *form* of writing, with the product often being the five-paragraph essay. While the most widely used of the various approaches to writing, it is, according to experts, the least effective at teaching writing skills (Hillocks, 2005; Smagorinsky, 2009). The readers of the observation and interview transcripts concluded that teachers were not teaching writing in a way that was consistent with principled practice. Rather, they were teaching argument writing by explaining how students should write, emphasizing techniques of *persuasion*, and

promoting generic templates for structuring compositions—all of which would be inconsistent with *principled practice*.

The data from the teacher interviews reveal the misinterpretation or the paucity of reflection by students during and upon completion of the writing process. Three of the four observed teachers either misinterpreted reflection as teacher feedback with student revision, or eliminated reflection from instruction entirely.

According to Yancey (1998), "Reflection is a critical component of learning and of writing specifically; articulating what we have learned for ourselves is a key process in that learning…" (p. 7). As such, reflection is one of the key elements, according to Boudreau Smith (2012), in a *principled practice* classroom. She explains, "Reflection helps students monitor their own thinking and become conscious of their processes, so that they can apply these processes to other situations; students need to understand not just *what* they did but *how* they did it and why that worked" (p. 20).

When directly questioned about how their students reflected on their writing throughout the writing process, Annie, Beth, and Chris all considered teacher feedback and student revision to be reflection. Yancy (1998) explains that reflection is "…the processes by which we know what we have accomplished and by which we articulate accomplishment and the products of those processes" (p. 6). All three participants interpreted reflection simply as the teacher providing them with very minimal feedback, such as a comment on the final draft of a paper, to fix misspellings, asking students to rewrite parts, or to explain why they used a particular sentence. Students are not actually thinking about the

accomplishments of their argument essays; they are not required to think about what they learned by engaging in the process of argumentation.

One participant, Debbie, did engage her students in reflection. She continually encouraged her students to think about what they thought about a particular topic. While instructing them in the components of argument, Debbie would show them various video clips and ask them to find the claim, evidence, and counter-argument. Further, she had her students explain why they thought they were correct, and why it was the claim, evidence, or the counter-argument. At the end of each lesson, and at the beginning of the next lesson, she asked students what they learned that was new. Finally, she did have her students complete a reflection of the argument writing process. She asked them to write what they did well, what they are most proud of, what they could have done better, and one question they have about the entire argument essay process. This shows that students are thinking not just about revisions, but about the process of argument writing as a whole. This helps them to understand not only what they did, but how they did it and why. Smith et al. (2013) posit that it is important for teachers to provide students with the opportunity to reflect "so they can transfer that knowledge to their subsequent writing" (p. 48).

Another component of a *principled practice* classroom emphasizes that *writing is socially mediated, utilizing purposeful peer interaction*. According to Boudreau Smith (2012), in the principled practice classroom, students work collaboratively to assist each other in the writing process. This includes working together to solve a given problem, peer and student conferences, engaging in discussions, and working together to edit, revise and publish their writing (Hillocks, 2010, 2011; Smagorinsky et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2012).

The readers of the observation and interview transcripts noted that student interaction was rare among the classes taught by the four teachers in the study.

As previously stated in Chapter 2, argument should be taught as collaborative deliberation rather than individual response that disregards or suppresses opposing views. All four participants engaged their students in debates against each other in which there would ultimately be a winner. According to Appendix A of the CCSS, Joseph M. Williams and Lawrence McEnerney of the University of Chicago Writing Program, emphasize that argument should be a collaborative process that seeks to understand the core issues of a given topic, not an individual debate or 'wrangling' (Common Core State Standards, Appendix A, 2010, p. 24). Similarly, Hillocks (2011), promotes argument lessons that rely on an inquiry approach that requires high levels of student interaction.

In all four of the classrooms observed, the debates that student's engaged in were individual debates; students had to come up with their own information and debate with another individual in that classroom. Smith, et al, (2012) emphasize engaging in debate as a collaborative process. They stress students working together in small groups with those that have similar roles. Also, in their book *Teaching Students to Write Argument*, Smagorinsky, et al, (2011) explain, "The activities in each chapter are inquiry-based. Students, in groups, explore possible solutions to a specific, concrete, familiar problem" (p. 3). They stress that students collaborate with each other throughout the entire process, and even discuss their ideas with each other before they write them on their paper. This sort of collaborative process did not occur in any of the classrooms observed. Instead, students were to come up

with their own ideas individually, never discussing them with anyone, and then debate with another individual in the classroom.

Peer editing is also a component of social mediation in the *principled practice* classroom, and another component that was missing from most of the participants' classrooms. Only one of the teachers in this study engaged her students in editing with purposeful peer interaction. Debbie had her students work together to edit their papers. Students were encouraged not only to look for grammatical and spelling errors, but to engage in conversations about content. They were able to discuss changes with each other and then, in turn, discuss edits in student-teacher conferences. The teacher would hold conferences with the group of students rather than individual conferences.

This sort of peer editing did not occur in any of the other classrooms. While peer editing did occur in both Annie and Beth's classroom, it was not socially mediated. Students in both classes were simply paired up with a partner in order to either check elements of writing off of a checklist, or using a rubric, actually grade the paper. Neither of the teachers required their students to give their partners verbal feedback or even engage in discussion about the editing of the paper; they simply handed the essay back to their partner. Chris confessed that she did not have her students peer edit their argument papers at all; instead she hoped that students would give each other feedback when they practiced their speeches with each other. She hoped that they would then apply this feedback to the revision of their argument essays. Boudreau Smith (2012) highlights the importance of socially mediated learning: "…as students discuss with each other, they push themselves to higher levels of cognition…and that is why peer and student conferences are so successful: as students talk

through their writing with others, they come to realizations they couldn't achieve on their own" (p. 19). Students need this validation with their peers throughout the entire writing process (Boudreau Smith, 2012; Smagorinsky, 2002; Smagorinsky et al, 2011; Smith et al, 2012).

The first component of *principled practice* is this: *Writers need strategies and heuristics, not formulas*. Smith et al. (2013), warns that traditional approaches to teaching writing are not adequate to meet the rigorous CCSS's for teaching argument writing. Boudreau Smith (2012) supports the notion that heuristics and strategies engage students in developing procedural knowledge, which is knowledge about *how* to write. While analyzing the interview and observational data, the readers noticed that three of the four teachers in this study relied on models, not strategies or heuristics, to teach their students argument writing. This type of instruction leans more toward the *presentational approach* rather than *principled practice*. Smagorinsky (2009) describes the *presentational approach* as "the default means of teaching writing." He further explains what this looks like in the classroom: "A teacher positioned in front of the room and taking an authoritative role in dispensing knowledge. Such teachers typically use model essays, often consisting of five-paragraphs, to reveal to students the end-product of their efforts…" (p. 17). Both Beth and Annie gave their students an argument "writing packet," which contained several examples of five-paragraph argument essays. Beth followed one essay, word-for-word throughout her instruction and had students highlight the important parts of the five-paragraph model essay. Both teachers completely dominated the instruction, with very minimal student interaction. Students used this model to assist them in the writing of their own argument essays.

Chris, likewise, relied on a model, specifically a graphic organizer. Students were provided with this graphic organizer and were told to "jot down their ideas" on the organizer. Chris explained that students needed no further instruction as to how to write the essay, as they were to organize it just like previous expository and narrative essays that they had written in class. According to Hillocks (2006), "The kind of knowledge required for effective narrative writing is quite different from that required for effective argument writing…" (p. 243). He goes on to express that while there is general knowledge associated with the teaching of writing; when teaching writing through inquiry, a teacher follows processes that are task specific. Hillocks (2011), Smagorinsky et al. (2011,) and Smith et al. (2012), all teach argument using very specific tasks. For example, when Hillocks (2011) teaches students argument of fact, he uses a lesson that focuses students on just representing the facts about a murder mystery case. The knowledge gained in this specific lesson transfers to subsequent task specific lessons on argument.

An additional component of principled practice states that *instructional activities are teacher-orchestrated but student-led*. Boudreau Smith (2012) posits that "Principled teachers take a back seat and empower their students to inhabit the learning for themselves" (p. 18). This was not a component that was observed in any of the participants' classrooms. All four teachers dominated the lessons observed, albeit some more than others. In both Annie and Beth's classroom lessons, there was a complete absence of student interaction as the teachers were the sole providers of knowledge. In Beth's classroom, students never even asked questions. While Annie made an attempt to engage her students by asking questions, they were typically recall questions and not the type of inquiry questions that students in a

principled practice class should engage in (Hillocks, 2011; Smagorinsky et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2012).

While it appeared that students were leading the instruction in Chris' classroom, this was not the case. As the observation progressed, it was clear to the transcript readers that Chris was leading the lesson as she was manipulating the direction of the debates. She encouraged students who were not prepared to engage in debate, and when they did not know how to respond to their opponent, Chris provided them with the answers. Furthermore, students never had the opportunity to discuss what they learned from the debates as they were transitioned immediately from the final debate into writing their argument paper. While Debbie allowed her students more engagement with each other, readers felt that she too led much of the lesson in her classroom. Students were engaged in several mini-discussions and then asked to summarize what was discussed. At no time during the observation would the lesson be classified as student-led.

To summarize, the most significant finding of research question three was that three out of the four participants taught what they saw as argument writing by utilizing a presentational approach inconsistent with *principled practice*. This was evident as the lessons were all teacher-led, utilizing models of five-paragraph essays or graphic organizers, which are typical components of the *presentational approach*.

It was obvious to the transcript readers that three of the four participants were not teaching argument through the lens of *principled practice* as several components of *principled practice* were either misinterpreted or lacking altogether. Three of the four participants did not engage their students in reflection or misinterpreted what reflection is.

Also, while they did involve their students in some type of peer-editing process, this process was not socially mediated. Students were not afforded the opportunity for discussion, nor were there any sort of useful feedback provided from their peers or the teacher. While all four participants did engage their students in debate, not one of these debates was conducted as a group; rather, all four teachers held individual debates where students prepared on their own. This hindered the opportunity for purposeful peer interaction, an important component of the *principled practice* classroom.

Furthermore, three out of the four teachers relied on models and not strategies or heuristics to teach argument writing. In the *principled practice* classroom, teachers use task specific strategies to teach argument. These strategies are transferred to subsequent task specific lessons, which students apply to their storehouse of knowledge of the writing process and the subject at the heart of their writing. Knowledge is also acquired in the *principled practice* classroom through use of student-led inquiry activities, but all of the teachers in this study dominated the lessons making it teacher-led, a common practice in the *presentational approach* to writing.

Implications of the Study

There are four noteworthy implications of this study. First, teachers need professional development in the area of argument writing. It is clear from the survey that very few teachers received any professional development in argument writing. Not one of the four participants in this study received professional development in argument writing. Applebee and Langer (2009) posit that when teachers engage in professional development in

the area of writing, they respond positively to their experiences, which help to support teachers in their classrooms. Providing teachers with professional development in the area of argument writing may provide teachers with a better understanding as to how argument and persuasion differ. This study highlighted that teachers are still teaching persuasion as if it were synonymous with argument. Professional development may help to make clear, the distinction between persuasive and argument writing.

A second implication of this study is that teachers need to be aware of the credibility and reliability of the resources that are available to them on the subject of teaching argument. Some of the teachers in this study relied on argument lessons downloaded from *Teachers Pay Teachers*, an internet site that allows teachers to provide their own pre-made lessons for free, or a nominal fee. While this may be convenient, this is not always the most credible or reliable source of information as evidenced from both Annie and Beth that used argument packets from this site. The packets contained some misinformation about the components of argument, as well as using a modeled five paragraph essay, indicative of the *presentational approach*, to teach argument.

A third implication of this study is that teachers need to spend more time focusing on argument writing in the classroom. Three of the four teachers only taught argument writing once during the year, before state testing. Argument writing should be taught earlier in the year and more than once. According to the Common Core State Standards (2010), writing should be a routine that is conducted over extended time frames, and shorter time frames.

The final implication in this study is that argument writing should be taught in a way that is consistent with *principled practice*. *Principled practice* represents teaching and

learning approaches that are supported consistently across a body of research about the teaching of writing (Hillocks, 2011; Smagorinsky et al, 2011; Smith et al, 2012). Boudreau Smith (2012) highlights six components of the *principled practice* which align with many of the experts' instruction on argument writing.

Limitations

One major limitation of this study is the sample size. Two hundred surveys were sent out to teachers in suburban schools in the Chicago area. Only 26 teachers responded to the survey. This sample may not be representative of schools and teachers across the state. Additionally, the timing of this study is a limitation, as some schools have just begun to "unpack" the CCSS. Some teachers may not yet have been exposed to the expectations of argument in the CCSS. Furthermore, only four teachers were interviewed, and these four teachers were the only ones observed as they taught in the classroom. The teachers come from Chicago suburban schools. These teachers may not be representative of middle school teachers as a whole, since they are likely to be teachers working in enviable circumstances, with stable leadership, positive parent support, and the resources necessary to provide professional development. If these teachers are uncertain about the CCSS conception of argument and appropriate ways to teach the procedures of argument, it is likely that teachers in hard to staff schools where there are fewer resources would be even more challenged to teach argument.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further investigation is needed to explore how prepared teachers are to teach argument in the middle school classroom. First, I suggest using a larger sample size. The initial survey should be sent to a sample that covers a wider range in the state of Illinois.

The second recommendation is to have a more diverse sample of participants to interview and observe. In this study, all participants taught only language arts. Future studies should incorporate teachers in various core subjects such as science, history/social studies, and technical subjects. A larger sample would include schools in different locations (urban, rural, and suburban) and of different sizes, perhaps revealing distinctions among school types as well as overall trends.

The third recommendation is to investigate those teachers who have had professional development in the area of argument writing and compare the impact on student learning with the impact on the students of teachers who have had no professional development. In this study, not one of the four participants received any professional development in the area of argument writing. While there is research that supports the need for professional development in the area of writing instruction, there is very little research that shows a strong correlation between specific types and duration of professional development and the resulting student achievement. Applebee and Langer (2009), report that teachers' experiences with professional development in the area of writing were positive. However, 20% to 30% of the teachers in their study did not receive any professional development and they explain that "the extent and usefulness of the experiences that were provided is unclear" (p. 26).

A final recommendation is to include in the study an analysis of student argument writing samples. Hillocks (2005) analyzed several state exam essays from both Texas and Illinois and was able to see what the state was accepting as claims and elaboration (evidence). He found that in both Texas and Illinois, examiners were accepting sub-claims as elaboration. The current study examined teachers' knowledge and practice but did not examine the writing that students produced as a result of instruction. It may be the case that the State provides exemplars or "mentor texts" that are inconsistent with a standard for argument as suggested by Toulmin (1958) or other authorities, such as Hillocks, Smith, or Smagorinsky.

Recommendations to the Field

All of the teachers that were observed and interviewed, and most of the teachers that responded to the survey for this study, had not received any professional development in the area of teaching argument. Additionally, the findings of this research suggest that most teachers are not prepared to teach argument as it is suggested in the CCSS. As a result, I have included this section to the study, and make the following recommendations to the field of education.

According to the Illinois State Report Card (2013-14), the average dollar amount spent per pupil in Illinois is $7,094. Instructional spending is the amount of money spent per pupil on resources devoted only to instruction. In chapter 3, Table 2, I provide a School Snapshot (IRC) of the schools surveyed for this study. A column on *Instructional Spending* is included which shows a vast difference in instructional spending from district to district,

from a high of $8,939 to a low of $4,727. With this in mind, I offer recommendations to the field that allow for a variety of budgets.

The first recommendation that I suggest is providing teachers with professional development. This can be conducted in a variety of ways, considering a range of budgets. Several professional development companies such as the Bureau of Education and Research (BER) and Heinemann offer professional development on-site (they come to you), off-site (workshops), or on-line. The on-line formats are delivered in a variety of formats such as; webinars, on-demand courses, and digital libraries. The least expensive professional development opportunities are the on-line formats.

If school districts do not offer professional development in these formats, then self-study of the topic can be researched through a variety of ways. Digital libraries have access to a plethora of research. Most colleges/universities have subscriptions to a selection of search engines that can provide access to thousands of peer-reviewed research articles and books. If you are a student, most resources are free. Additionally, Google provides a Google Scholar search (scholar.google.com) which provides anyone access to scholarly articles and books for free or a nominal fee. Professional books on the topic of how to teach argument in the classroom can be obtained in used or new formats on a variety of sites such as Amazon or Heinemann. Professional books that have helped me to learn how to teach argument in my own class include: *Teaching Argument Writing, Grades 6-12: Supporting Claims with Relevant Evidence and Clear Reasoning*, by George Hillocks, Jr.(2011), *Teaching Students to Write Argument*, by Peter Smagorinsky, Larry R. Johannessen, Elizabeth A. Kahn, and

Thomas M. McCann, and *Oh, Yeah?! Putting Argument to Work Both in School and Out*, by Michael W. Smith, Jeffrey D. Wilhelm, and James E. Fredricksen.

A final recommendation to the field is to contact the experts in the field of argument. Throughout this study, I have referenced many experts in the field of argument, including the ones that have authored the books that I have recommended. A quick Google search may provide you with their contact information. I have found, through my experience with this study, that experts can be receptive to providing you with assistance, advice, or leading you to other valuable resources.

Final Thoughts

Today's classroom is much different than the classrooms that existed when Toulmin was writing *The Uses of Argument*. Students in today's classroom have access to a plethora of information from varying and vast amounts of sources. At this point, the transition from persuasion to argument seems critical, as getting to the deeper understandings about questions is more of a challenge in today's saturated, information rich environment. Using logic to sort through information, to formulate a claim that is richly supported with clear reasoning, and reliable evidence, is essential for students in today's classroom.

As a middle school teacher, I have implemented argument in several subjects that I have taught including history, science, and communications. Using the teachings of Hillocks and others as a framework for my classroom instruction, I have created many lessons that have flowed well into existing curriculum.

As part of the curriculum in my history class, students have engaged in debate to discover who the original inhabitants of Easter Island were. Students worked in groups to determine if it was the Polynesians, or based on Thor Heyerdahl's theory, the native Indians from South America. They were provided with information from both sides of the debate, but they had to decide which side had the stronger evidence. Students worked with their group to write a claim, provide evidence, support the evidence, and include at least two counter-arguments. In my opinion, the strongest part of this process was when the students engaged in discussions and were trying to discover which side had the strongest evidence.

In my communication class, where I have devoted an entire unit to teaching argument, students have learned argument of fact, judgement, and policy. One year, students composed and conducted an exemplary argument of policy on the topic of cell phones in the classroom. They conducted surveys and gathered data from most of the classrooms in the school. They also found data from local schools on their cell phone policies. When they were nearing the end of their research, one group was so excited they implored me to reach out to the administrators so that they could present their results to them. Both the principal and the assistant principal were invited to hear the group present their findings. The administrators were so impressed that the next school year students were able to use their cell phones in the morning before their first class.

As an educator, I find argument to be vital part of any classroom, in any subject. As a researcher I have learned how important it is to know how to teach argument as it is suggested in the CCSS. Consequently, teachers in the middle school classroom must be

prepared to teach argument, as a means for students to think about concepts and problems and as preparation for the extensions in high school and college.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

PRINCIPAL RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear Principal_____,

My name is Victoria Albon and I am a NIU Doctoral student currently working on my dissertation. The topic of my dissertation is teaching argument in the middle schools. I am focusing my dissertation on how prepared teachers are to teach argument as it is written in the Common Core State Standards.

In order to collect data for my research I am contacting teachers in the Chicago land area to answer a brief survey on Survey Monkey. Upon completion of the survey participants will have the option of contacting me to become involved in further research which would entail interviews and observations. **The following link will take you to the Survey Monkey survey:**

It would be greatly appreciated if you could forward this email to your classroom teachers.

Thank you in advance,

Victoria Albon

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

(NIU Letterhead)

I agree to participate in the research study, Teaching Argument Writing in the Middle School Classroom being conducted by Victoria D. Albon, a graduate student at Northern Illinois University. I have been informed that the purpose of this study is to examine how prepared middle school teachers are to teach argument in the middle school classroom.

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I will be asked to do the following: Complete two a face-to-face interviews. Each interview should take approximately take 20-30 minutes to complete. Allow the researcher to observe in my classroom for a minimum of one class period and a maximum of two class periods.

I am aware that my participation is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without penalty or prejudice, and that if I have any additional questions concerning this study, I may contact Victoria Albon at ---------- or Dr. Thomas McCann at ----------. I understand that if I wish further information regarding my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at ----------.

I understand that the intended benefits of this study include understanding teachers' preparedness in teaching argument, and what areas of professional development may be needed to strengthen the teaching of argument in the middle school classroom.

I understand that all information gathered during this study will be kept confidential. The researcher will be providing pseudonym names to participants. Transcribed interviews will have the pseudonym name as well. Only Victoria Albon will have knowledge of the participants' real names. Transcriptions will be kept in a locked drawer for the duration of this study and will shredded upon completion of the study.

I understand that my consent to participate in this project does not constitute a waiver of any legal rights or redress I might have as a result of my participation, and I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

_____ _____

Participant Signature: Date:

_____ _____

Advising Faculty Signature: Date:

APPENDIX C

EMAIL TO EXPERTS- MODIFIED DELPHI TECHNIQUE

Hello,

I am a NIU doctoral student working with Dr. Thomas McCann on my dissertation. The title of my dissertation is: *Teaching Argument in the Middle School Classroom, Are Teachers prepared?* I am writing to you today to ask for your expertise in the field of argument. I am in the process of developing a survey to use as one means of collecting data, and to find participants to interview and observe for my research. I am requesting your assistance in the development of my survey via an abbreviated version of the Delphi method. The process should take a little of your time to react to a draft version of a survey about the teaching of argument.

I understand if this is not a convenient time for you to be involved in this process. I would appreciate if you could reply and let me know if you would be willing to assist me or not. If you would like to be involved in the modification and validation of this survey please feel free to open the attachment and begin the process.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Victoria Albon

Attachment:

In an effort to gain some insights into how much middle school teachers know/understand about teaching argument in their classroom, I need to develop a survey that seeks to provide some data to help me in arriving at some conclusions for my research questions. Originally I had planned to use the Delphi method to create the survey. This method involves consulting with experts in the field and having the experts engage in at least three rounds of questioning with verification for each round. But with the assistance of Dr. McCann, we created a sample survey that would meet qualifications for IRB approval. My proposal committee thought that the survey questions would be a suitable starting point for the Delphi method, thus reducing the rounds.

In order to create a survey to collect data in support of my research, I reflected on the following three questions:

1. If a middle school teacher is going to teach students about argument, what are three to five key concepts that the teacher should know?
2. If a teacher is going to follow principled practice in teaching students to write arguments, what are the three to five key elements that the teacher will say are important?
3. If a teacher is going to teach students to write arguments in a way that is consistent with the Common Core State Standards, what are the three to five key elements that the teacher should be aware of?

Considering these questions, I developed the following survey items:

1. **Directions:** Please respond to each of the following statements according to the following scale:

   4 = Strongly Agree
   3 = Agree
   2 = Disagree
   1 = Strongly Disagree

2. The CCSS emphasize the teaching of *argument*.
3. *Argument* and *persuasion* are related but not synonymous terms.
4. *Argument* necessarily refers to a competitive, or even combative, exchange between speakers.
5. A solid argument would provide evidence (i.e., data, information) to support claims.
6. Thoroughly developed arguments would recognize and evaluate competing points of view.
7. Arguments reveal limitations or qualifications to claims.
8. The term *argument* necessarily implies that there will be a winner and a loser.
9. An *argument* refers to a logical unit of thought.
10. Arguments often involve the recognition of rules, laws, or principles to interpret the relevance and significance of information.

11. The CCSS acknowledge that argument is a means for arriving at understanding of complex texts and ideas.

12. The CCSS suggest that argument is a key way of thinking for students' academic and career success.

Please comment on the degree to which each statement is appropriate for collecting data about teachers' knowledge about CCSS, the teaching of argument, and/or the teaching of writing.

Additionally, please feel free to compose questions that you feel would be effective in capturing how much (or how little) a teacher knows about teaching argument in a way that is consistent with the Common Core State Standards.

Please submit your reply by ***March 17th***, so that I may send the questions back to all of the experts for final verification.

Thank you for volunteering your expertise to assist in the development of my survey.

Sincerely,

Victoria Albon

APPENDIX D

COMPLETED SURVEY

Argument Survey:
Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and the Teaching of Argument

I understand that my responses to this survey will be included as part of the data for the study, but neither I nor my school will be identified specifically.

Directions: Please respond to the following questions:

1. What grade level do you teach?

   6^{th} only 7^{th} only 8^{th} only Multiple grade levels

2. How many years have you been teaching?

   0-5 years 6-10 years 11-15 years 16-20 years 21-25 years 25+ years

3. How many years have you been teaching in your current grade level?

   0-5 years 6-10 years 11-15 years 16-20 years 21-25 years 25+ years

4. Please check the primary subject(s) you teach:

   Language Arts Science Math Social Studies

   Physical Education Foreign Language Other (please specify)

5. Have you had professional development in the area of argument?

   Yes No

6. Please rate the degree of confidence you have in teaching argument in your subject area(s).

   Not confident Somewhat confident Confident Very confident

7. **Directions:** Please respond to each of the following statements according to the following scale:

   4 = Strongly Agree
   3 = Agree
   2 = Disagree
   1 = Strongly Disagree

8. The CCSS emphasize the teaching of *argument*.

9. *Argument* and *persuasion* are related but not synonymous terms.

10. *Argument* necessarily refers to a competitive, or even combative, exchange between speakers.

11. A solid argument would:

    provide evidence (i.e., data, information) to support claims.

    recognize and evaluate competing points of view.

    reveal limitations or qualifications to claims.

    involve the recognition of rules, laws, or principles to interpret the relevance and significance of information.

12. The term *argument* necessarily implies that there will be a winner and a loser.

13. An *argument* refers to a logical unit of thought.

14. The CCSS acknowledge that argument is a means for arriving at understanding of complex texts and ideas.

15. The CCSS suggest that argument is a key way of thinking for students' academic and career success.

16. Phase II of my research involves two face-to-face interviews, and classroom observations of the teaching of argument with a focus on writing. Are you willing to share your experiences and participate in a confidential 20-30 minute personal interview and classroom observations regarding this topic?

NO - thank you for participating in my survey.

YES - then please click here

Thank you for considering participation in phase II of my research. Please provide me with contact information in the form of an email address or phone number.

Prior to the actual interviews and observation you will be required to read and sign an informed consent form.

Please note that should you provide contact information, your survey results will no longer be anonymous. I will, however, keep your responses confidential and any results will only be presented as aggregate data. If you do not wish for your survey responses to be linked to you, but you wish to participate in an interview and observation, you can e-mail me at ---------- so that you may provide your contact information.

APPENDIX E

PRINCIPAL RECRUITEMENT LETTER

Dear Principal_____,

My name is Victoria Albon and I am a NIU Doctoral student currently working on my dissertation. The topic of my dissertation is teaching argument in the middle schools. I am focusing my dissertation on how prepared teachers are to teach argument as it is written in the Common Core State Standards.

In order to collect data for my research I am contacting teachers in the Chicago land area to answer a brief survey (only 3-5 minutes) on SurveyMonkey. Upon completion of the survey participants will have the option of contacting me to become involved in further research which would entail interviews and observations. **The following link will take you to the Survey Monkey survey**

https://www.surveymonkey.com

It would be greatly appreciated if you could forward this email to your classroom teachers.

Thank you in advance,

Victoria Albon

APPENDIX F

FIRST ROUND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

First Round Interview Questions

1. In what subject area do you teach argument?
2. Describe your approach to teaching argument?
3. Is this approach similar/different to other forms of writing you taught previously to CCSS?
4. How responsive have students been to learning how to write argument?
5. What evidence do you have that students have grown as writers in the area of argument?
6. Describe what I will see when I observe you teaching argument to your class.
7. How many class sessions will I need to observe you teaching argument?

APPENDIX G

SECOND ROUND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Second Round Interview Questions-Participant A

1. Tell me how you introduced the "argument packet" to them before this lesson.
2. How did you teach then about the elements of argument: claim, reasons/evidence, counter claim?
3. Did students engage in a debate before they wrote the essay? What was the topic? Were they similar to the topics they wrote about?
4. Where did the topics (school uniforms, censorship of books, homework) for the argument essays come from?
5. How many class periods did it take to finish the essay?
6. You mentioned "peer editing" for a future date, how did you implement this process?
7. Did you discuss how to find information on the internet with students prior to this essay?
8. Did students have an opportunity for reflection upon completion of their essay or during the process of writing their argument? If so, how was this conducted?
9. How many more argument essays will they write during the year?
10. In our first interview you inferred that most Language Arts teachers at your school are not teaching argument, what do you think they do instead (persuasive) to meet the standards of CCSS? How do you think it is different from what you are doing?

APPENDIX H

ARGUMENT WRITING OBSERVATIONAL RUBRIC

Argument Writing Observational Rubric: Components of Principled Practice

Writing Component	**YES** Component was observed	**NO** Component was not observed	**UNCLEAR** Whether component was present
11. The teacher emphasizes attention to **claims** in argument writing (drawing conclusions, assertions, generalizations, etc.).			
12. The teacher emphasizes **evidence** in argument writing (support).			
13. The teacher emphasizes **warrants** in argument writing (interpreting the evidence).			
14. The teacher emphasizes attention to **rebuttals** or counter-arguments.			
15. The teacher teaches composing **strategies** or **heuristics**, rather than formulas.			
16. The teacher emphasizes writing as a **process**.			
17. The teacher **scaffolds** instruction by building on prior knowledge and moving from simple to complex.			
18. Instructional activities are **teacher-orchestrated** but **student-lead**.			
19. The teacher represents writing as a socially mediated activity involving **purposeful peer interaction**.			
20. The teacher builds in stages for **reflection** in the writing process.			

Source: Boudreau Smith (2012)

APPENDIX I

REFERENCE SHEET FOR CODING PURPOSES

Reference Sheet For Coding Purposes

Six components of argument: *claim, data, warrant, backing, qualifier,* and *rebuttal*.

Argument: Logical appeals which involve claims, evidence, warrants, backing, and rebuttal. "Argument is about making a case in support of a claim in everyday affairs

**Backing: Supports the warrant in an argument, (rule, law, science) example-the science that supports the reliability of the fingerprints.

**Claim: In an argument, this is the answer to a question or the thesis statement

**Counter-Argue (rebuttal): Claims that contest competing claims

**Data or Evidence: Information or examples that support the claim in an argument.

**Warrant: According to Toulmin (1958) a warrant justifies how the data supports the

claim. Example, fingerprints.

**Qualifications: are statements of the conditions under which the claim will be true.

Principled Practice:

The process of writing, while teacher-orchestrated, should be student-lead, making writing a social process. Teachers who attend to the implications of the research teach students processes or heuristics as opposed to templates or formulas, and foster reflection so that learners can transfer knowledge to other content areas (Boudreau Smith, 2012).

Presentational approach- uses mostly models of other students' writings with the teacher presenting what to write, with very little student involvement, and less attention to teaching students the *procedures* to writing.

General process approach- is an individualistic approach to teaching writing. This approach to teaching writing emphasizes, "writer's workshops," characterized by the individual attention students receive from the teacher and the choices they are allowed to make in topics to read and write about.

Structured process or environmental approach-sometimes labeled as "inquiry-based learning." In a *structured process*, students seek to learn and practice procedures that are important for specific writing tasks. It employs a form of instructional scaffolding that is task-based and discussion-driven.

Principled Practice- This approach to writing instruction challenges teachers to think about materials available to them, their diverse students, their own beliefs about teaching and how students learn, and the culture of the school in which they teach (Smagorinsky, 2002). Given all of these attributes, teachers must decide the most effective way to teach in particular

situations. With this in mind, this approach takes into account the features of both the writer's workshop and inquiry-based writing approaches. It does not include the presentational approach.

The Six Components of a Principled Practice:

****Writers Need Strategies and Heuristics, Not Formulas.** The first component to emerge from the research is that writers need "to engage in strategies and heuristics, not formulas, to grow as writers" (Boudreau Smith, 2012, p. 15). Heuristics and strategies engage students in procedural knowledge, which teaches students how to write.

****Writing is about Process, Not Product.** Teachers should be engaging their students in the steps in the process of writing. This process needs to be structured by the teacher and include activities such as, engaging students in generating ideas, talking, and working in groups to plan, edit, and revise.

****Instruction must be Scaffolded and Aligned to Specific Writing Tasks** In order to provide scaffolding in a principled practice, it is delivered in two different ways. Meeting the needs of individual learners is one way in which learning is scaffolded. Additionally, the teacher scaffolds the instruction according to the objective of the lesson being taught.

****Instructional Activities are Teacher-Orchestrated but Student-lead.** Scaffolding the instruction requires teachers to be mindful of the sequence of the lesson design, which can be either conducted through a workshop environment or inquiry-based lesson. Both approaches call for the teacher to design the lesson, a final product, and a series of tasks in which students engage in to complete the final product. The most important aspect of this principle is that the teacher engages students in student-centered activities, rather than teacher-centered instruction (Boudreau Smith, 2012).

****Writing is Socially-Mediated.** In the inquiry-based classroom the teacher has identified the themes and designed the sequence of the lessons, but it is the students who will work together to solve the given problems. Social interaction is also evident in the workshop-based approach as students interact with each other and their teacher during peer and student conferences, and during teacher modeling and coaching. In the principled classroom students are working together to create meaning, they engage in discussions, and they work together to edit, revise, and finally "publish" their writing.

****Reflection is Essential to Cognition.** In the inquiry-based approach, both teacher and students engage in reflective practice. Teachers continually reflect on instruction and its effects on student learning. For students, reflection is the final stage of the inquiry-based process, where students reflect in writing on the knowledge they acquired by engaging in the process.

(**refers to items on the observational rubric)