

Teaching and learning argumentative non-fiction writing for 7–14 year olds

A systematic review of the evidence of successful practice

Who wants to know?

Teachers, pupils and policy-makers are keen to know how best to teach and learn argumentative writing at Key Stages 2 and 3 in the National Curriculum. Difficulties with such writing are well-known.

What did we find?

Results showed that certain conditions have to be in place to create a climate for successful practice. These are not specific to argumentative writing but include:

- a writing process model in which students are encouraged to plan, draft, edit and revise their writing;
- self-motivation;
- some degree of cognitive reasoning training in addition to the natural cognitive development that takes place with maturation;
- peer collaboration, thus modelling a dialogue that (it is hoped) will become internal and constitute 'thought'; and
- explicit and very clear explanations for students of the processes to be learned.

The specific strategies identified that have contributed to successful practice in teaching and learning with regard to argumentative writing for 7-14 year olds include:

- 'heuristics', i.e. scaffolding of structures and devices that aid the composition of argumentative writing - in particular, planning, which can include examining a question, brainstorming, organizing

and sequencing ideas and evaluating;

- planning which is extensive, elaborated and hierarchical;
- the use of oral argument, counterargument and rebuttal to inform written argument;
- the identification of explicit goals (including audiences) for writing;
- teacher modelling of argumentative writing; and
- 'procedural facilitation', i.e. coaching by teaching through the process of writing argument.

How did we get these results?

Via an EPPI-Centre systematic review conducted in collaboration with policy-makers and teacher educators. The review question was:

What is the evidence for successful practice in teaching and learning with regard to non-fiction writing (specifically argumentative writing) for 7-14 year olds?

What are the implications?

The results from this review suggest that more work needs to be undertaken at Key Stage 2, in particular, to develop argumentative writing by linking it to critical thinking and other approaches which aim to encourage reasoning. While argument has a more secure place in the National Curriculum than in 1990, it needs to continue to be encouraged and developed; and more research needs to be undertaken to determine how best to teach it.

Where to find further information

For more information about the content of this review please contact:

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The results of this systematic review are available in four formats:

SUMMARY

Explains the purpose of the review and the main messages from the research evidence

FINAL REPORT

Describes the background and the findings of the review(s) but without full technical details of the methods used

TECHNICAL REPORT

Includes the background, main findings, and full technical details of the review

DATABASES

Access to codings describing each research study included in the review

These can be downloaded or accessed at <http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/reel/>

The references for the reports of this review are:

REPORT

Andrews R, Torgerson C, Low G, McGuinn N, Robinson A (2006) Teaching argumentative non-fiction writing to 7-14 year olds: A systematic review of the evidence of successful practice. Report. In: *Research Evidence in Education Library*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

TECHNICAL REPORT

Andrews R, Torgerson C, Low G, McGuinn N, Robinson A (2006) Teaching argumentative non-fiction writing to 7-14 year olds: A systematic review of the evidence of successful practice. Report. In: *Research Evidence in Education Library*. London: EPPI-Centre, Social Science Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London.

This document is available in a range of accessible formats including large print. Please contact the Institute of Education for assistance:

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