



GRADE 6 LITERACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: WRITING EDITORIALS

UNIT OVERVIEW

The *Writing Editorials* unit is part of Writing Matters, a seven-unit genre-based writing curriculum for middle school students, created by Teaching Matters, and available at Teachingmatters.com (see learning plan for details). A pivotal shift in the Common Core standards from Grade 5 to Grade 6 is the shift from writing opinions to writing arguments. In this unit, 6th graders are introduced to the genre of argument writing.

TASK DETAILS

Task Name: Writing Editorials

Grade: 6

Subject: Literacy in ELA

Depth of Knowledge Level of the Task: Level 3

Task Description: Students will learn about a controversial issue and develop a claim about that issue. Then, they will read four related informational texts, taking notes to use in a written argument in the form of an editorial. Students write an editorial stating their claim about year-round schooling using evidence from the readings.

Standards:

RI.6.1. Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

W.6.1. 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, phrases, 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.

L.6.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

- a. Use punctuation (commas, parentheses, dashes) to set off nonrestrictive/parenthetical elements.
- b. Spell correctly.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of "Disadvantages to Year Round School" http://www.ehow.com/info_8131173_disadvantages-year-round-schools.html
- Computer with web access to play "Balanced Calendar – Year Round School" <http://vimeo.com/35900457>
- "Year-Round School? My Kids Love It. Yours Will, Too" <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/05/AR2009060501971.html>
- "Year Round School Pros and Cons" <http://www.buzzle.com/articles/year-round-school-pros-and-cons.html>
- "Year-Round Education Arguments in Favor of Year-Round Education" <http://www.compclass.us/yre/for.html>
- "Year-Round Education Arguments Against Year-Round Education" <http://www.compclass.us/yre/against.html>



TABLE OF CONTENTS

The task and instructional supports in the following pages are designed to help educators understand and implement Common Core–aligned tasks that are embedded in a unit of instruction. We have learned through our pilot work that focusing instruction on units anchored in rigorous Common Core–aligned assessments drives significant shifts in curriculum and pedagogy. Callout boxes and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) support are included to provide ideas for multiple entry points for diverse learners.

PERFORMANCE TASK: WRITING EDITORIALS	3
RUBRIC	5
ANNOTATED STUDENT WORK	9
INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS	22
UNIT OUTLINE	23
ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS	28

Acknowledgements: This set of instructional resources was developed by Teaching Matters, Inc., and reviewed for CCLS alignment by the Common Core Fellows. It was piloted by teachers in NYC public schools.



GRADE 6 LITERACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: WRITING EDITORIALS

PERFORMANCE TASK

The writing task described in this section asks students to make a “claim” supported by “clear reasons” and “relevant evidence” as required by the 6th grade Common Core standards (W.6.1). In the instructional supports section, there is a version of this task with three activities that lead up to the performance task. As it is written in the instructional supports section, the task is scaffolded for the students in a way that would teach the standards but would not assess independent mastery. To assess for independent mastery of the standards, we suggest using the task as written in this section.

The task also asks students to explain the other side (an opposing claim) and a strong counterclaim, although this is not required until 7th grade. Teachers have the choice of including this portion of the task if they would like to increase the rigor of the task for some or all of their students. If not, these portions of the student copy of the task can simply be deleted.

Performance Task

Student Handout

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Writing Your Editorial

Write an editorial stating your position on year-round schooling. You will have two periods to complete this task.

Be sure to include:

- An engaging opening
- Background information that introduces your topic
- A clear claim
- Two separate supporting arguments/reasons, with effective matching evidence from reliable sources
- Words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among claims and reasons
- Citations that show the sources of your evidence
- An explanation of the other side and a strong counterclaim (optional)
- A call to action in your conclusion

Check your writing for correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar.



GRADE 6 LITERACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS:WRITING EDITORIALS

RUBRIC

Writing Editorials Rubric

Scoring Student Work Using the Editorial Rubric

The Editorial Rubric allows both teachers and students to assess the quality of the work. The same rubric is used for student work produced during the performance task and the accompanying Writing Editorials unit. Students should be introduced to the rubric during the unit so that they fully understand the characteristics of a strong editorial.

Teacher Scoring

The rubric is based on 100 points. To calculate a total score, teachers assign a score for each dimension (for example, Topic and Ideas) of the rubric (up to 20) and then add the five dimension scores.

1. For each rubric dimension, assign a score of 11-20. Writing must clearly demonstrate the skills stated in a given column in order to receive that score. Note that there is a range of scores (for example, 16-18) representing each level in order to offer flexibility to the teacher:
 - 19-20 = Exceeds Standard (Level 4)
 - 16-18 = Meets Standard (Level 3)
 - 13-15 = Developing (Level 2)
 - 11-12 = Rewrite (Level 1)
2. Add scores in all categories to get a Total Score.
For example, if a piece of writing has a "16" for all writing categories (Topic and Ideas, Organization, etc.), then that writer's Total Score would be 80.

SIMPLE SCORING OPTION: If preferable, select the student's area of greatest strength by underlining the category. Then circle the category of greatest need for that student. Record findings on a copy of the rubric. Do not calculate a numeric score.

Student Scoring

When self-assessing work at the end of each unit, student scoring options include:

1. Calculating a score for each rubric dimension by Level (1-4) since this convention is familiar. Students can then calculate an average score that falls within the range of 1-4.
2. Scoring each dimension using the 20-point scale and calculating a Total Score of up to 100.
3. Identifying rubric dimensions/categories of strength and weakness without calculating a numeric score.

Editorial Rubric (Page 1 of 2)

Identify statements that best describe student's editorial and get a score.

Get a Score

Calculate a score for each category of the rubric. Then add to get a total score.

Editorial Characteristics (11-20) _____

Topic and Ideas (11-20) _____

Organization (11-20) _____

Language (11-20) _____

Conventions (11-20) _____

TOTAL SCORE (out of 100) _____

	Exceeds Standard Level 4	Meets Standard Level 3	Developing Level 2	Rewrite Level 1
	Editorial Characteristics: How well have you incorporated specific genre characteristics?			
	Common Core Learning Standards W.6.1 and RI.6.1			
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Powerfully introduces claim and provides background information that explains the issue well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly introduces a claim and provides background information relevant to issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduces a general or unclear claim and/or provides background information only partially related to issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A claim is missing or the claim is difficult to understand and/or provides background information that is limited or unrelated to issue
Reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports claim with two or more clear and separate reasons Supports claim using effective evidence from credible sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports claim with two clear but not necessarily separate reasons Supports claim using relevant evidence from credible sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports claim with one or two reasons that may not be clear Supports claim using limited relevant evidence from credible sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claim lacks support with clear reasons Evidence to support the claim is missing or not from credible sources
Opposing Claim (OPTIONAL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledges opposing claim and organizes the reasons and evidence logically and completely Explains counterclaim forcefully and logically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledges opposing claim and organizes the reasons and evidence logically Explains counterclaim clearly and logically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledges opposing claim, but may not state reasons and evidence clearly or logically Attempts to make a counterclaim, but it is not totally clear or logical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opposing claim is not clearly stated or supported with reasons and evidence The counterclaim is missing, ineffective, or unrelated to the claim
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a forceful concluding statement that follows from the argument presented Strongly provides a call to action, that clearly relates to the claim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a clear concluding statement that follows from the argument presented Provides a call to action that relates to the claim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts to provide a concluding statement that follows from the argument presented, but the statement may not be clear Attempted to provide a call to action, which vaguely relates to the claim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not provide a concluding statement Does not provide a call to action or it may not relate to the claim
Assign Points (Circle one)	20 19	18 17 16	15 14 13	12 11

Editorial Rubric (Page 2 of 2)

Common Core Learning Standards W.6.1, L.6.2

	Exceeds Standard Level 4		Meets Standard Level 3			Developing Level 2			Rewrite Level 1	
	Topic and Ideas: Does your topic mean something to you and your readers?									
Overall Idea	• Original, specific, relevant, and grabs readers' attention		• Specific and relevant to readers' interest			• General and may not be relevant to readers			• Unfocused or irrelevant	
Supporting Ideas	• Convincing, consistently reinforces the claim		• Clear and relevant, reinforces the claim			• Included, sometimes reinforces the claim			• Does not reinforce the claim	
Assign Points (Circle one)	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11
	Organization: Is your writing easy to follow?									
Sequence of Ideas	• Order of reasons has a clear progression that adds to the meaning of the overall argument		• Order of reasons is logical, easy to follow			• Order of reasons is somewhat logical, sometimes hard to follow			• Order of ideas is not logical, too confusing to follow	
Transitions	• Words, phrases, and clauses consistently create cohesion and clarify relationships among claim, reasons, and evidence		• Words, phrases, and clauses consistently clarify relationships among claim and reasons			• Words, phrases, and clauses occasionally clarify relationships among claim and reasons			• Words, phrases, and clauses are not used to clarify relationships among claim and reasons	
Paragraphs	• Well developed, key ideas emphasized		• Complete and understandable			• Attempted, but have too much or too little information			• Lacks clear structure	
Assign Points (Circle one)	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11
	Language: Have you chosen words that clearly explain what you mean?									
Descriptive Language	• Vivid or original phrases		• Precise and specific phrases			• Basic or too wordy			• Limited, tells instead of describes	
Word Choice	• Authoritative and powerful		• Accurate and specific			• Non-specific, vague, and/or repetitive			• Limited	
Sentences	• Consistently complete sentences with accurate and varied structure		• Consistently complete sentences with accurate structure			• Inconsistently complete sentences with accurate structure, still understandable			• Basic and often inaccurate sentence structure, detracts from meaning	
Assign Points (Circle one)	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11
	Conventions: Did you pay attention to the rules of writing?									
Grammar/ Usage	• Consistently accurate		• Mostly accurate			• Sometimes accurate, errors do not interfere with understanding			• Often inaccurate, errors interfere with understanding	
Mechanics	Consistently accurate • Punctuation • Capitalization • Spelling		Mostly accurate • Punctuation • Capitalization • Spelling			Sometimes accurate • Punctuation • Capitalization • Spelling			Often inaccurate • Punctuation • Capitalization • Spelling	
Assign Points (Circle one)	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11



GRADE 6 LITERACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS: WRITING EDITORIALS

ANNOTATED STUDENT WORK

This section contains annotated student work at a range of score points and suggested next steps for students. The student work shows examples of student understandings and misunderstandings of the task. Each piece of student work has been typed for ease of reading, but spelling, capitalization, or other errors have not been corrected. For each piece of student work, we include a graded analytic rubric. Student work is annotated with comments focused on the writer's performance on the primary trait of the rubric: Editorial Characteristics (W.6.1). This is followed by a summary describing student performance on the entire rubric and suggestions for next instructional steps.

Grade 6 Literacy in ELA: Writing Editorials

Annotated Student Work

Student A – Level 3 in Editorial Characteristics and overall

Nothing But Stress!

Year round school! What a brilliant idea! That's what people think, but do you believe that? Year round schools bring nothing but stress to us. Teachers get too much pressure and cannot teach well enough. Students can't participate in outside school programs. Some parts of the United States have already started year-round schools. It's spreading out very quickly. I need to stop this, but I can't do it alone! Come on guys! I need your help!

Year-round schools bring nothing but stress to us. For example, students can't participate in outside school programs. According to the article "Disadvantages to Year-Round Schools", by Lisa Magloff teens have a hard time finding jobs. In the traditional calendar they can work during the 2 long months they can find a job and work. Now they have to fix a job every one of two months. Lisa also mentioned in her article that it can be difficult for students to play outside school sports. For example, they might have school on important competitions and finals. This makes kids very unhappy. It might be hard to find a good schedule.

The other reason why year round schools bring stress is because teachers get too much pressure, that they can't even teach well enough. Theresa Greenfield found out that some teachers had to teach intersession classes. These are classes during students vacation time. The reason why this causes stress is because, during the class she/he is teaching right now, will have to start planning and preparing for the next sessions. This puts a lot of pressure on teachers. I know it, because my cousin N_____ has experienced something like this. As she describes it, "My life is miserable. I can't even finish planning what I have to do for this class, when I have to start for the next. Lord save me!". A few weeks later she quit her job in a school in Pennsylvania. Now think, what's the point of year round schools when teachers can't teach or when teachers quit their job?

Pro-year-round school people say that year round schools improves our lives. How? They say "Year-round schools improve childrens grade". How in the world can students learn when teachers start quitting their jobs? How can they improve? HA HA! These people should think before what they say. According to Brigid Schultz, a parent, she says that her children were having fun at school. They were liking the school programs and stuff, but how can she be so sure things won't change. What if her children wants to do something outside of school? What if her son wants to get a job, but he can't get one, or even if he does he will have to find right with his school schedule. Eventually parents will have to suffer along with their children. Isn't it better to just relax and go to normal school and have a job? Isn't it better for parents and children to just get what they want?

To conclude, year-round schools bring nothing but stress. Teachers get too much pressure. Students can't participate in outside school programs. Eventually, we all will have to suffer. I need to stop this. To do that, I need your help. You gotta help me. We gotta work together. Let's start petition and protests. Together! We can do this!

Comment [LB1]: W.6.1a: Although the student provides little background information about the issue, the student clearly introduces the claim that the spread of year-round schooling must be stopped and it previews two main reasons for the claim: teachers face too much pressure and students can't work or participate in extracurricular activities.
Overall idea:
The student conveys his/her claim in an engaging manner.

Comment [LB2]: W.6.1.b, RI.6.1: The writer supports his/her claim with a clear reason and relevant evidence by citing a clearly identified and credible source. By adding the relevant evidence of teens having a difficult time finding jobs, the student is demonstrating an understanding of the topic and text.

Comment [U3]: W.6.1.a,b: By adding that year round schools bring stress to teachers in this paragraph, the writer includes and organizes a second reason to support his/her claim.

Comment [LB4]: RI.6.1, W.6.1.b: The writer cites another written source to support his/her claim. However, it only refers to the author and does not clearly identify the source.

Comment [LB5]: W.6.1b. The writer could bring his or her writing to the next level by elaborating on this topic with clear evidence from a credible source that would further demonstrate an understanding of the topic and/or text.

Comment [LB6]: W.6.1 and W.7.1a: The writer exceeds CCLS grade-level expectations by acknowledging an alternate or opposing claim.

Comment [U7]: W.6.1.e: The writer summarizes his/her argument and reasons to support his/her claim. This provides a concluding statement that follows from the argument presented.

Comment [U8]: Conclusion/W.6.1e: His/her closing statement is forceful, if a bit dramatic.

Comment [U9]: W.6.1d: Although the tone would not be right for a formal argument essay, it is appropriate for an editorial.

Comment [LB10]:
Conclusion/W.6.1e: S/he makes a specific call to action, asking her readers to start petitions and protests.

Grade 6 Literacy in ELA: Writing Editorials

Annotated Student Work

Student A – Summary:

Overall, this piece of writing meets standard (Level 3). The student demonstrates a solid understanding of the characteristics of the genre by making a claim supported by clear reasons and credible evidence. The writer's claim is supported by two clear and distinct reasons. Each reason is supported by a reference to a specific article that students read. However, the writer was not completely clear in her citations. S/he needs to provide additional information, such as the writer's name and/or the article title. The writer goes beyond 6th grade Common Core Learning expectations by acknowledging the opposing claim (a 7th grade skill) and countering it with a logical reason (a 9th grade skill).

For Topic and Ideas, the student meets the standard with a specific overall idea and clear, relevant supporting ideas. In terms of organization, the writer makes satisfactory use of transitions and paragraphing. In Language, the writer's sentence fluency meets the standard. His or her word choice is occasionally incorrect or awkward, but this is compensated for by an unusually strong voice. The piece contains some spelling errors, but they do not interfere with understanding.

Next instructional steps: This student needs help completing the transition from the more informal opinion writing of elementary school to the more formal argument writing required beginning in 6th grade. The impassioned tone of the writing is appropriate for the assigned editorial, but the student will need to assume and maintain a formal tone going forward. Another area for improvement is the citation of textual evidence. The student needs additional instruction and practice incorporating author and source information into his or her sentences for direct quotations and for paraphrases. For both issues, the writer may benefit from exposure to additional mentor texts and opportunities to revise incorrect models. To facilitate bringing the student's writing to the next level, the teacher could underline parts of the essay that need more elaboration and ask the student to add 1-2 supporting details.

Grade 6 Literacy in ELA: Writing Editorials

Annotated Student Work

Editorial Rubric (Page 1 of 2)

Student A

Identify statements that best describe the student's editorial and get a score.

Get a Score

Calculate a score for each category of the rubric. Then add to get a total score.

Editorial Characteristics (11-20)	18
Topic and Ideas (11-20)	17
Organization (11-20)	17
Language (11-20)	18
Conventions (11-20)	16
TOTAL SCORE (out of 100)	86

	Exceeds Standard Level 4	Meets Standard Level 3	Developing Level 2	Rewrite Level 1
	Editorial Characteristics: How well have you incorporated specific genre characteristics? Common Core Learning Standards W.6.1 and RI.6.1			
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Powerfully introduces claim and provides background information that explains the issue well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly introduces a claim and provides background information relevant to issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduces a general or unclear claim and/ or provides background information only partially related to issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A claim is missing or the claim is difficult to understand and/or provides background information that is limited or unrelated to issue
Reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports claim with two or more clear and separate reasons Supports claim using effective evidence from credible sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports claim with two clear but not necessarily separate reasons Supports claim using relevant evidence from credible sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports claim with one or two reasons that may not be clear Supports claim using limited relevant evidence from credible sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claim lacks support with clear reasons Evidence to support the claim is missing or not from credible sources
Opposing Claim (OPTIONAL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledges opposing claim and organizes the reasons and evidence logically and completely Explains counterclaim forcefully and logically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledges opposing claim and organizes the reasons and evidence logically Explains counterclaim clearly and logically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledges opposing claim, but may not state reasons and evidence clearly or logically Attempts to make a counterclaim, but it is not totally clear or logical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opposing claim is not clearly stated or supported with reasons and evidence The counterclaim is missing, ineffective, or unrelated to the claim
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a forceful concluding statement that follows from the argument presented Strongly provides a call to action, that clearly relates to the claim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a clear concluding statement that follows from the argument presented Provides a call to action that relates to the claim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts to provide a concluding statement that follows from the argument presented, but the statement may not be clear Attempted to provide a call to action, which vaguely relates to the claim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not provide a concluding statement Does not provide a call to action or it may not relate to the claim
Assign Points (Circle one)	20 19	18 17 16	15 14 13	12 11

Grade 6 Literacy in ELA: Writing Editorials

Annotated Student Work

Editorial Rubric (Page 2 of 2)

Student A

Common Core Learning Standards W.6.1, L.6.2

	Exceeds Standard Level 4	Meets Standard Level 3	Developing Level 2	Rewrite Level 1
Overall Idea	Topic and Ideas: Does your topic mean something to you and your readers?			
Supporting Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Original, specific, relevant, and grabs readers' attention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Specific and relevant to readers' interest</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> General and may not be relevant to readers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unfocused or irrelevant
Supporting Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convincing, consistently reinforces the claim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Clear and relevant, reinforces the claim</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Included, sometimes reinforces the claim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not reinforce the claim
Assign Points (Circle one)	20 19	18 17 16	15 14 13	12 11
Sequence of Ideas	Organization: Is your writing easy to follow?			
Transitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Order of reasons has a clear progression that adds to the meaning of the overall argument 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Order of reasons is logical, easy to follow</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Order of reasons is somewhat logical, sometimes hard to follow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Order of ideas is not logical, too confusing to follow
Paragraphs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Words, phrases and clauses consistently create cohesion and clarify relationships among claim, reasons, and evidence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Words, phrases, and clauses consistently clarify relationships among claim and reasons</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Words, phrases, and clauses occasionally clarify relationships among claim and reasons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Words, phrases, and clauses are not used to clarify relationships among claim and reasons
Paragraphs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well developed, key ideas emphasized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Complete and understandable</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempted, but have too much or too little information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lacks clear structure
Assign Points (Circle one)	20 19	18 17 16	15 14 13	12 11
Descriptive Language	Language: Have you chosen words that clearly explain what you mean?			
Word Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authoritative and powerful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Precise and specific phrases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic or too wordy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited, tells instead of describes
Sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently complete sentences with accurate and varied structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Accurate and specific</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-specific, vague, and/or repetitive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited
Sentences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently complete sentences with accurate and varied structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Consistently complete sentences with accurate structure</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inconsistently complete sentences with accurate structure, still understandable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic and often inaccurate sentence structure, detracts from meaning
Assign Points (Circle one)	20 19	18 17 16	15 14 13	12 11
Grammar/ Usage	Conventions: Did you pay attention to the rules of writing?			
Mechanics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently accurate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Mostly accurate</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sometimes accurate, errors do not interfere with understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often inaccurate, errors interfere with understanding
Mechanics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently accurate Punctuation Capitalization Spelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Mostly accurate</i> <i>Punctuation</i> <i>Capitalization</i> <i>Spelling</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Sometimes accurate</i> Punctuation Capitalization <i>Spelling</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often inaccurate Punctuation Capitalization Spelling
Assign Points (Circle one)	20 19	18 17 16	15 14 13	12 11

Grade 6 Literacy in ELA: Writing Editorials

Annotated Student Work

Student B – Level 2 in Editorial Characteristic and overall

Year-long calinder

Do you want a longer school year? Of course you don't! You want to go outside and have fun. The Department of education (DOE) is thinking of making the school year longer for use to "learn more". But that's not true. There has been sighns that kids haven't been "learning more" with the new longer school year. I think, they shouldn't make the school year longer.

If the DOE decides that there going to make it longer, kids will forget what they learned. This is because with the longer school year, there are more breaks through out the year, witch is confusing kids, and making it hard to remember what they learned before the break. If the children don't remember what they learned, teachers will have to re-teach it all over agian, and they won't get promoted to the next grade.

Also, it would be a waste of money. We all know the summer is really hot, so the school will have to put on the air condishiner (A.C.) and that cost money. Furthermore, the school will have to pay the teachers for the extra weeks there working. Even more, with the school tearing down, they have to do repairs in the summer, but since the school year is longer, classes will be interrupted, and the repiars will cost money.

With the longer school year, kids would have more time to study. WRONG! Kids would forget after the long breaks. Also, kids would get bored sitting in a hot smelly classroom; and not pay attintion to the teachers.

In conclusion, no one would want a longer school year, you would want to go outside. If you don't want a longer school year, talk with your principle to prevent it from happening to your school. You could also sighn a potition.

Comment [IP11]: W.6.1.a: The opening paragraph displays the writer's partial understanding of the issue in question. Year-round schooling is only slightly longer than the traditional school year. Primarily it is a scheduling shift.

Comment [IP12]: W.6.1.a: The writer clearly states his/her claim that s/he is against a longer school year.

Comment [IP13]: W.6.1.b: The writer clearly states his or her first reason and its logical ourcomes.

Comment [IP14]: W.6.1b and RI.6.1: The student attempts to support the claim with relevant evidence but does refer to a credible source. This shows a lack of understanding of how to cite textual evidence. It is possible that the student did not construct this argument from the text.

Comment [LB15]: W.6.1b and RI.6.1: Again, the writer provides a reason and elaborates on the logic behind it. The second argument relates to the financial burden of a year-round schedule and the argument can be understood with reference to air conditioning, teacher salaries and repair costs. However the student does not support any facet of this argument with textual evidence showing a lack of understanding of how to cite textual evidence.

Comment [LB16]: W.6.1c and W.7.1a: The student attempts to exceed grade level expectations with the acknowledgement of the opposing claim. Yet, there is no transitional phrase to introduce the opposing claim, making it unclear.
W.6.1b and Paragraphs:
The paragraph could be further developed with relevant evidence and reasons.

Comment [IP17]: W.6.1e: The writer signals her conclusion with a partial restatement of the claim, but it does not follow from the argument by summarizing supporting reasons.

Comment [IP18]: Conclusion: The conclusion provides a suggested actions for readers.

Grade 6 Literacy in ELA: Writing Editorials

Annotated Student Work

Student B – Summary

In editorial characteristics and argument writing, Student B is developing. -Although his or her claim is quite clear, the student does not display a clear understanding of the central issue possibly due to a problem in reading comprehension. -The writer provides two clear and distinct reasons to back up the claim using common sense reasoning to support them. -S/he fails to include any textual evidence or any other reference to credible sources. An acknowledgement of an opposing claim is attempted but remains undeveloped. (This is not required until 7th grade by the Common Core Learning Standards.) In terms of the more general writing dimensions, i.e., Topic and Ideas, Organization, and Language and Conventions, the writer is developing. The piece has an organized structure, however the use of transitions is inconsistent and only some paragraphs are fully developed. Word choice and sentence fluency are often awkward but do not interfere with understanding. The most significant problem with conventions is an abundance of spelling errors in grade-level vocabulary.

Next instructional steps: The student's greatest area of need is the inclusion of specific textual evidence. Although this task provided five texts from which to draw, the writer included no citations. Some of his or her reasons echoed those given in the texts, but it is unclear whether or not the reasons were taken from the text, which does not allow for an assessment of the mastery of RI.6.1. An analysis of the student's completed handouts should reveal whether the problem is insufficient note taking, a problem transferring notes into or out of a graphic organizer, or difficulty incorporating evidence and citations into a written piece. The student may benefit from additional opportunities to practice citing textual evidence in writing. This can be done in a more scaffolded manner by providing models, feedback, and opportunities for self-assessment on a regular basis.

Grade 6 Literacy in ELA: Writing Editorials

Annotated Student Work

Editorial Rubric (Page 1 of 2)

Student B

Identify statements that best describe student's editorial and get a score.

Get a Score

Calculate a score for each category of the rubric. Then add to get a total score.

Editorial Characteristics (11-20)	___ 15 ___
Topic and Ideas (11-20)	___ 15 ___
Organization (11-20)	___ 15 ___
Language (11-20)	___ 15 ___
Conventions (11-20)	___ 15 ___
TOTAL SCORE (out of 100)	___ 75 ___

	Exceeds Standard Level 4	Meets Standard Level 3	Developing Level 2	Rewrite Level 1
	Editorial Characteristics: How well have you incorporated specific genre characteristics? Common Core Learning Standards W.6.1 and RI.6.1			
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Powerfully introduces claim and provides background information that explains the issue well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly introduces a claim and provides background information relevant to issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Introduces a general or unclear claim and/ or provides background information only partially related to issue</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A claim is missing or the claim is difficult to understand and/or provides background information that is limited or unrelated to issue
Reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Supports claim with two or more clear and separate reasons</i> Supports claim using effective evidence from credible sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports claim with two clear but not necessarily separate reasons Supports claim using relevant evidence from credible sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports claim with one or two reasons that may not be clear Supports claim using limited relevant evidence from credible sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claim lacks support with clear reasons <i>Evidence to support the claim is missing or not from credible sources</i>
Opposing Claim (OPTIONAL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledges opposing claim and organizes the reasons and evidence logically and completely Explains counterclaim forcefully and logically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledges opposing claim and organizes the reasons and evidence logically <i>Explains counterclaim clearly and logically</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Acknowledges opposing claim, but may not state reasons and evidence clearly or logically</i> Attempts to make a counterclaim, but it is not totally clear or logical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opposing claim is not clearly stated or supported with reasons and evidence The counterclaim is missing, ineffective, or unrelated to the claim
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a forceful concluding statement that follows from the argument presented Strongly provides a call to action, that clearly relates to the claim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a clear concluding statement that follows from the argument presented <i>Provides a call to action that relates to the claim</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Attempts to provide a concluding statement that follows from the argument presented, but the statement may not be clear</i> Attempted to provide a call to action, which vaguely relates to the claim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not provide a concluding statement Does not provide a call to action or it may not relate to the claim
Assign Points (Circle one)	20 19	18 17 16	15 14 13	12 11

Grade 6 Literacy in ELA: Writing Editorials

Annotated Student Work

Editorial Rubric (Page 2 of 2)

Student B

Common Core Learning Standards W.6.1, L.6.2

	Exceeds Standard Level 4	Meets Standard Level 3	Developing Level 2			Rewrite Level 1
Topic and Ideas: Does your topic mean something to you and your readers?						
Overall Idea	• Original, specific, relevant, and grabs readers' attention	• Specific and relevant to readers' interest	• <i>General and may not be relevant to readers</i>			• Unfocused or irrelevant
Supporting Ideas	• Convincing, consistently reinforces the claim	• <i>Clear and relevant, reinforces the claim</i>	• Included, sometimes reinforces the claim			• Does not reinforce the claim
Assign Points (Circle one)	20 19	18 17 16	15	14	13	12 11
Organization: Is your writing easy to follow?						
Sequence of Ideas	• Order of reasons has a clear progression that adds to the meaning of the overall argument	• <i>Order of reasons is logical, easy to follow</i>	• Order of reasons is somewhat logical, sometimes hard to follow			• Order of ideas is not logical, too confusing to follow
Transitions	• Words, phrases, and clauses consistently create cohesion and clarify relationships among claim, reasons, and evidence	• Words, phrases, and clauses consistently clarify relationships among claim and reasons	• <i>Words, phrases, and clauses occasionally clarify relationships among claim and reasons</i>			• Words, phrases, and clauses are not used to clarify relationships among claim and reasons
Paragraphs	• Well developed, key ideas emphasized	• Complete and understandable	• <i>Attempted, but have too much or too little information</i>			• Lacks clear structure
Assign Points (Circle one)	20 19	18 17 16	15	14	13	12 11
Language: Have you chosen words that clearly explain what you mean?						
Descriptive Language	• Vivid or original phrases	• <i>Precise and specific phrases</i>	• Basic or too wordy			• Limited, tells instead of describes
Word Choice	• Authoritative and powerful	• Accurate and specific	• <i>Non-specific, vague, and/or repetitive</i>			• Limited
Sentences	• Consistently complete sentences with accurate and varied structure	• Consistently complete sentences with accurate structure	• Inconsistently complete sentences with accurate structure, still understandable			• Basic and often inaccurate sentence structure, detracts from meaning
Assign Points (Circle one)	20 19	18 17 16	15	14	13	12 11
Conventions: Did you pay attention to the rules of writing?						
Grammar/ Usage	• Consistently accurate	• Mostly accurate	• Sometimes accurate, errors do not interfere with understanding			• Often inaccurate, errors interfere with understanding
Mechanics	Consistently accurate • Punctuation • Capitalization • Spelling	<i>Mostly accurate</i> • Punctuation • Capitalization • Spelling	<i>Sometimes accurate</i> • Punctuation • Capitalization • Spelling			Often inaccurate • Punctuation • Capitalization • Spelling
Assign Points (Circle one)	20 19	18 17 16	15	14	13	12 11

Grade 6 Literacy in ELA: Writing Editorials

Annotated Student Work

Student C – Level 1 in Editorial Characteristics,

Level 2 overall

Disadvantages to Year Round Schooling

Some boys and girls go to Year Round Schooling to learn a lot of new things, do stuff, or make their parents happy but not me.

According to EHOW.com students who go to Year Round Schooling don't get to spend enough time with their parents and it costs a lot of money.

One reason kids should not go to Year Round Schooling because their parents can not find time to juggle their family vacations. Also, their kids only spend 2 months with their parents while traditional schools spend like 3 or 4 months with their parents. Also, traditional schools get lots and lots of vacations.

Another reason, is Year Round Schools cost a lot of money like 2,500 dollars or even less. Next year, Year Round Schools might drop the cost to like 1,500 dollars or \$700. Traditional schools to get your child in you will have to sign papers and your child is in.

One more reason is that students in Year Round Schools should not go because they might have to get up early in the morning get dressed and might have to wait for a school bus.

The other people think they should go because they think that it will help their grades. But it wouldn't help their kids.

Students should not go to Year Round Schools because they cost a lot of money, they don't have time to spend with their parents, and they might have to get up early in the morning.

Comment [LB19]: W.6.1a: The writer provides some background information about year-round schooling, but does not clearly state the claim in the introduction.

Comment [LB20]: W.6.1a and b: The writer attempts to introduce two clear disadvantages to year-round schooling. These reasons are correctly attributed to the eHow.com article, but the writer does not refer to any specific evidence.

Comment [LB21]: W.6.1b: This paragraph repeats an assertion from the eHow.com article, that "parents can not find time to juggle their family vacations". The writer attempts to support the reason with details, but they are inaccurate and appear to be made up.

Comment [LB22]: W.6.1b: Again, the writer has invented details that neither make sense nor logically support the argument. While the article asserts that year-round schooling costs school districts more money, perhaps the writer has misconstrued this to mean that year-round schools charge tuition.

Comment [LB23]: W.6.1b and c: The writer uses an appropriate transition to introduce a third reason, but his or her reasoning is unclear. There is no textual evidence to support the idea that students in year-round schools have to get up earlier in the morning or are more likely to take a school bus.

Comment [LB24]: W.6.1b and W.7.1a: The writer acknowledges an opposing claim but does not support it with textual evidence.

Comment [LB25]: W.6.1a: This is the first clear statement of the student's claim.
W.6.1e: The student provides a concluding sentence reiterating the reasons that they use to support their claim.

Grade 6 Literacy in ELA: Writing Editorials

Annotated Student Work

Student C – Summary:

Student C does not meet the standards for editorial characteristics and argument writing. The piece lacks a clear statement of the claim and provides minimal background information on the issues of year-round schooling. -Reasons are presented, but they are supported only with dubious facts and unsound reasoning. The opposing claim is mentioned, however this is not required by the Common Core Learning Standards until 7th grade. The student does not provide a call to action in the conclusion. The overall effect of the piece is decidedly unpersuasive.

In the more general writing dimensions, i.e., Topic and Ideas, Organization, and Language and Conventions, the piece is developing (Level 2). The writer's Topic and Ideas score reflects the poor quality of his or her argument and general lack of understanding of the topic. Appropriate transitions are used to introduce each reason, but other parts of the essay are not signaled by transitional phrases. There is a clear effort to paragraph, yet the paragraphs themselves are underdeveloped. Language use is basic and vague (e.g., "learn a lot of new things, do stuff"). There are several errors in conventions but nothing that interferes with understanding.

Next instructional steps: The student has two main areas of need. The first is the use of specific textual evidence to support an argument. The student needs to be explicitly taught that credible text-based evidence is a requirement for argument writing. The student will probably benefit from additional instruction and practice in note taking and the incorporation of author and source information into his or her sentences. Mentor texts and self-assessment opportunities should be key components of this instruction. Also, the use of a graphic organizer can help students keep track of, and organize, the information needed to cite sources.

The writer's second learning gap is more fundamental and, hence, more difficult to address. It is difficult for many younger students to understand what constitutes a match between an argument and the evidence that supports it. This student's capacity for logical reasoning needs to be gradually built. Repeated teacher modeling of the evidence matching process with robust think-alouds that clearly explain the warrants or reasoning that connects evidence to arguments, will help. -Many students also benefit from additional practice matching evidence to arguments, outside of the context of the writing process.

Grade 6 Literacy in ELA: Writing Editorials

Annotated Student Work

Editorial Rubric (Page 1 of 2)

Student C

Identify statements that best describe student's editorial and get a score.

Get a Score

Calculate a score for each category of the rubric. Then add to get a total score.

Editorial Characteristics (11-20)	__ 12 __
Topic and Ideas (11-20)	__ 13 __
Organization (11-20)	__ 15 __
Language (11-20)	__ 14 __
Conventions (11-20)	__ 15 __
TOTAL SCORE (out of 100)	__ 69 __

	Exceeds Standard Level 4	Meets Standard Level 3	Developing Level 2	Rewrite Level 1
	Editorial Characteristics: How well have you incorporated specific genre characteristics? Common Core Learning Standards W.6.1 and RI.6.1			
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Powerfully introduces claim and provides background information that explains the issue well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly introduces a claim and provides background information relevant to issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduces a general or unclear claim and/ or provides background information only partially related to issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A claim is missing or the claim is difficult to understand and/or provides background information that is limited or unrelated to issue
Reasons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports claim with two or more clear and separate reasons Supports claim using effective evidence from credible sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports claim with two clear but not necessarily separate reasons Supports claim using relevant evidence from credible sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports claim with one or two reasons that may not be clear Supports claim using limited relevant evidence from credible sources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claim lacks support with clear reasons Evidence to support the claim is missing or not from credible sources
Opposing Claim (OPTIONAL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledges opposing claim and organizes the reasons and evidence logically and completely Explains counterclaim forcefully and logically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledges opposing claim and organizes the reasons and evidence logically Explains counterclaim clearly and logically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acknowledges opposing claim, but may not state reasons and evidence clearly or logically Attempts to make a counterclaim, but it is not totally clear or logical 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opposing claim is not clearly stated or supported with reasons and evidence The counterclaim is missing, ineffective, or unrelated to the claim
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a forceful concluding statement that follows from the argument presented Strongly provides a call to action, that clearly relates to the claim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a clear concluding statement that follows from the argument presented Provides a call to action that relates to the claim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts to provide a concluding statement that follows from the argument presented, but the statement may not be clear Attempted to provide a call to action, which vaguely relates to the claim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not provide a concluding statement Does not provide a call to action or it may not relate to the claim
Assign Points (Circle one)	20 19	18 17 16	15 14 13	12 11

Grade 6 Literacy in ELA: Writing Editorials

Annotated Student Work

Editorial Rubric (Page 2 of 2)

Student C

Common Core Learning Standards W.6.1, L.6.2

	Exceeds Standard Level 4		Meets Standard Level 3			Developing Level 2			Rewrite Level 1	
Overall Idea	Topic and Ideas: Does your topic mean something to you and your readers?									
	• Original, specific, relevant, and grabs readers' attention		• Specific and relevant to readers' interest			• <i>General and may not be relevant to readers</i>			• Unfocused or irrelevant	
Supporting Ideas	• Convincing, consistently reinforces the claim		• Clear and relevant, reinforces the claim			• Included, sometimes reinforces the claim			• <i>Does not reinforce the claim</i>	
Assign Points (Circle one)	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11
Sequence of Ideas	Organization: Is your writing easy to follow?									
	• Order of reasons has a clear progression that adds to the meaning of the overall argument		• <i>Order of reasons is logical, easy to follow</i>			• Order of reasons is somewhat logical, sometimes hard to follow			• Order of ideas is not logical, too confusing to follow	
Transitions	• Words, phrases, and clauses consistently create cohesion and clarify relationships among claim, reasons, and evidence		• Words, phrases, and clauses consistently clarify relationships among claim and reasons			• <i>Words, phrases, and clauses occasionally clarify relationships among claim and reasons</i>			• Words, phrases, and clauses are not used to clarify relationships among claim and reasons	
Paragraphs	• Well developed, key ideas emphasized		• Complete and understandable			• <i>Attempted, but have too much or too little information</i>			• Lacks clear structure	
Assign Points (Circle one)	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11
Descriptive Language	Language: Have you chosen words that clearly explain what you mean?									
	• Vivid or original phrases		• Precise and specific phrases			• <i>Basic or too wordy</i>			• Limited, tells instead of describes	
Word Choice	• Authoritative and powerful		• Accurate and specific			• <i>Non-specific, vague, and/or repetitive</i>			• Limited	
Sentences	• Consistently complete sentences with accurate and varied structure		• Consistently complete sentences with accurate structure			• <i>Inconsistently complete sentences with accurate structure, still understandable</i>			• Basic and often inaccurate sentence structure, detracts from meaning	
Assign Points (Circle one)	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11
Grammar/ Usage	Conventions: Did you pay attention to the rules of writing?									
	• Consistently accurate		• Mostly accurate			• Sometimes accurate, errors do not interfere with understanding			• Often inaccurate, errors interfere with understanding	
Mechanics	Consistently accurate • Punctuation • Capitalization • Spelling		<i>Mostly accurate</i> • Punctuation • Capitalization • Spelling			<i>Sometimes accurate</i> • Punctuation • Capitalization • Spelling			Often inaccurate • Punctuation • Capitalization • Spelling	
Assign Points (Circle one)	20	19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11



GRADE 6 LITERACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

ARTS: WRITING EDITORIALS

INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS

The instructional supports on the following pages include a unit outline with formative assessments and three activities that lead up to the performance task. In this section, the task is scaffolded for the students in a way that would teach the standards, but not assess independent mastery. Teachers may use this unit outline as it is described, integrate parts of it into a currently existing curriculum unit, or use it as a model or checklist for a currently existing unit on a different topic.

An important note on the Common Core Learning Standards and the *Writing Editorials* Unit:

With the adoption of the Common Core Learning Standards, 6th grade teachers will place increased emphasis on argument writing in which a *claim* is supported by clear *reasons* and relevant *evidence*. Opinion writing is something that, as we move closer to full adoption of the Common Core Learning Standards, most students should have experienced in elementary school (see CCLS W.5.1) and serves as the foundation for the 6th grade transition to argument writing. Whereas both opinion writing and argument writing require a clear introduction, supported reasons, and a related conclusion, argument writing requires the student to go beyond supporting his or her reasons with personal experience to incorporating “relevant evidence, using credible resources” (Common Core Learning standard W.6.1). Argument writing in 6th grade adds the extra demands of research and the inclusion of specific textual evidence to the opinion-writing skills built in the elementary years.

The *Writing Editorials* unit, available on TeachingMatters.com (see learning plan for details), contains both the important elements of argument writing and those of editorial writing. Argument writing is based solely on an appeal to logic (logos) and can be contrasted with editorial writing, which may contain elements of formal argumentation, but also emphasizes an appeal to the reader’s emotions (pathos) to make its impact. While not required for formal argument writing or mentioned in the 6th grade Common Core Learning standards, the *Writing Editorials* unit contains persuasive elements such as a call to action, use of a passionate tone and an engaging anecdote, all of which are effective writing strategies and an integral part of the authentic genre of editorial. Teachers implementing this instructional bundle may wish to clarify the difference between argument writing, opinion writing, and editorial writing, in general, for their students at the beginning of the unit.

Additionally, the *Writing Editorials* unit uses a few terms that differ from those used in the Common Core Learning Standards for 6th grade and in this bundle. Students are directed to form “opinions” rather than “claims” and support those opinions with “arguments” rather than “reasons”. Although the vocabulary is different, the skills are the same. In addition, the unit asks students to address “the other side,” although the Common Core Learning Standards do not require students to “acknowledge alternate or opposing claims” until 7th grade.

As we move toward full adoption of the Common Core Learning Standards, teachers need to ensure that their students are familiar with the vocabulary of formal argument (i.e., claim, reason, evidence, and counterclaim). The *Writing Editorials* unit is making that transition, and a new release of the unit, updated with the language of the Common Core and a lesson on the distinction between argument writing, opinion writing, and persuasive writing in general, will be available in Fall 2012.

Unit Outline

INTRODUCTION: This unit outline provides an example of how to integrate performance tasks into a unit. *Teachers may (a) use this unit outline as it is described below; (b) integrate parts of it into a currently existing curriculum unit; or (c) use it as a model or checklist for a currently existing unit on a different topic. The length of the unit includes suggested time spent on the classroom instruction of lessons and administration of assessments. Please note that this framework does not include individual lessons.*

Grade 6 English Language Arts: Writing Editorials

UNIT TOPIC AND LENGTH

The *Writing Editorials* unit is part of Writing Matters, a seven-unit genre-based writing curriculum for middle school students created by Teaching Matters and available at Teachingmatters.com (see learning plan for details). A pivotal shift in the Common Core Learning standards from Grade 5 to Grade 6 is the shift from writing opinions to writing arguments. In this unit, 6th graders are introduced to the genre of argument writing.

- First, they clearly express their claims on controversial topics about which they feel passionate. They are challenged not only to support their claims with arguments/reasons backed by evidence found through research, but also to consider an opposing point of view and counter the “other side’s” claim. Students convince their audience of the importance of their topic by issuing a call to action. In doing so, middle school editorial writers become empowered to create change in their communities.
- This *Writing Editorials* unit lasts **six weeks** and takes students through a process of writing an argument essay, supported by relevant evidence.

COMMON CORE LEARNING STANDARDS:

Primary Standards

- RI.6.1. Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- W.6.1. 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, phrases, 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.
- L.6.2. Demonstrate command of the conventions of Standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
 - a. Use punctuation (commas, parentheses, dashes) to set off nonrestrictive/parenthetical elements.
 - b. Spell correctly.

Secondary Standards

- W.6.4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ W.6.6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing as well as to interact and collaborate with others; demonstrate sufficient command of keyboarding skills to type a minimum of three pages in a single sitting. ➤ W.6.10. Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences. ➤ W.6.8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources; assess the credibility of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and providing basic bibliographic information for sources. 	
<p>BIG IDEAS/ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Persuasive writing and argument writing have a specific structure including clear arguments supported by reasons and relevant evidence. ➤ We can change others' thoughts, beliefs, and actions with our words. ➤ Writing is a process that includes brainstorming, (sometimes) research, organizing, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. 	<p>ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What are the characteristics of editorials as a writing genre? ➤ What makes an editorial persuasive? ➤ How can I find effective evidence to support my claim? ➤ How can I persuade my audience to take action? ➤ What kind of tone or stance makes writing most persuasive?
<p>CONTENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Brainstorming ➤ Editorial topic ➤ Credibility of sources ➤ Note taking ➤ Argument ➤ Claim ➤ Relevant textual evidence ➤ Opposing view ➤ Transitional phrases ➤ Concluding statement ➤ Point of view ➤ Powerful language ➤ Peer review 	<p>SKILLS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Brainstorm and conceive a claim about a controversial topic. ➤ Evaluate the credibility of sources ➤ Write an editorial that effectively . ➤ Support a claim on a controversial topic with clear reasons and relevant evidence. ➤ Develop strategies and techniques for argument writing and corresponding approaches to planning, drafting and revising their writing using technology, i.e. note taking, use of graphic organizers, peer review. ➤ Apply a variety of craft strategies and structures to bring out the editorial's meaning and grab the attention of readers, i.e., acknowledging opposing views, using transitional phrases, providing concluding statements that follow from the argument. ➤ Use powerful language to support argument writing.

VOCABULARY/KEY TERMS:

- Editorial, persuasive, controversial, claim, supporting argument, evidence, counterclaim

ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE AND ACTIVITIES**INITIAL ASSESSMENT :**

Although an initial assessment is not included, consider assessing students' background knowledge on the topic of year-round schooling and argument writing by asking students to independently write a piece that argues for or against year-round schooling at the beginning of the unit.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

The *Writing Editorials* unit (Teachingmatters.com – see learning plan for details) contains several informal formative assessments that are labeled as “checkpoints”. Specifically, student progress and understanding should be assessed after:

- Lesson 1.4 – Check for an editorial topic with appropriate scope and controversy.
- Lesson 2.2 – Assess whether students are taking relevant notes with sufficient detail and source information.
- Lesson 3.3 – Assess the strength of students' arguments/reasons and counterclaims.
- Lesson 4.4 – Check the quality of students' initial drafts, concentrating on use of evidence.
- Lesson 5.5 – Assess the quality of peer review comments.
- Lesson 6.1 – Assess the accuracy of editing for conventions.

FINAL PERFORMANCE TASK:

Students will learn about a controversial issue and develop a claim about that issue. Then, they will read four related informational texts, taking notes to use in a written argument in the form of an editorial. Students write an editorial stating their claim about year-round schooling using evidence from the readings.

LEARNING PLAN & ACTIVITIES:

The *Writing Editorials* unit is part of Teaching Matters' Writing Matters series. *Writing Editorials* offers six weeks of instruction organized into six steps, each containing approximately four lessons.

The entire unit can be accessed on the Teaching Matters Demo site at <http://www.teachingmatters.org/moodle/login/index.php>. Simply log in with the username 'demo' and the password 'demo' to see all the lessons as well as all the supporting resources.

➤ **Step 1: Select Your Topic**

After exploring the persuasive nature of editorials, students brainstorm ideas for their own writing. By the end of this step, students commit to editorial topics that they believe are controversial and about which they feel passionately.

➤ **Step 2: Gather Your Evidence**

While students are writing about topics with which they are familiar, editorials are only persuasive if they include solid evidence supporting the writer's claim. With this in mind, students begin to develop strong arguments/reasons by gathering facts, quotations, statistics and examples related to their topics. Students use web searches, books, and other print materials to gather material that will ultimately be incorporated into their written pieces.

➤ **Step 3: Plan Your Editorial**

During Step 3, students organize the information they gathered to make it meaningful and persuasive to readers. After selecting their most powerful evidence to deepen their arguments/reasons, they identify the “other side” of the argument and the best approach to countering it. By the end of this step, students should have outlined the body of a convincing editorial.

Additional Support Strategies

For students who need help accessing the meaning of text, consider providing them with annotated texts that break down complex vocabulary.

➤ **Step 4: Write Your First Draft**

Students draw on both the research they completed and the outlines constructed earlier in order to draft their editorials. Students are encouraged to stay focused on their arguments/reasons and counterclaims while crafting paragraphs that convince their readers of their claims on their topic. At the end of the week, all students should have complete drafts of their editorials.

Additional Support Strategies

For students who need help understanding the concept of argument, consider assessing and building background knowledge using the following strategies: use of checklists contrasting opinionated versus objective arguments, using video clips and focus questions to demonstrate the power of argument, and supplying sentence starters to note observations with peers. For examples of checklists and sentence starters, visit the following documents on the Common Core Library, under the “See Student Work” tab: ELA/Literacy for ELLs and Students with Disabilities.

➤ **Step 5: Revise**

During the fifth step of the *Writing Editorials* unit, students add details and revise their texts for persuasiveness, clarity of meaning, and point of view. They collaborate with peers to ensure that their written work conveys meaningful ideas and inspires readers to take action and/or agree with the author’s claim.

➤ **Step 6: Edit & Publish**

During this final step of the unit, students edit their written work for grammar and spelling errors. After evaluating their editorials with the rubric, they celebrate their accomplishments by publishing their completed editorials online. At the end of the step, students respond to each other’s editorials by writing thoughtful reactions to their classmates’ work.

Additional Support Strategies

Throughout the unit, students needing additional support are scaffolded with special “differentiated instruction” handouts. In addition, specific differentiated strategies are recommended for use during writers’ work time in each lesson. Please see the Instructional Supports section of the bundle for supports for the task and the Teaching Matters web site (<http://www.teachingmatters.org/moodle/login/index.php>) for differentiated handouts.

RESOURCES

- Computer with web access to play “Balanced Calendar – Year Round School”
<http://vimeo.com/35900457>
- LCD projector and speakers
- Student instruction sheets/graphic organizers for each task
- Lined paper or computers for drafting editorials

Texts Used

(with Lexile levels)

- "Arguments Against Year Round Education." *Ms. Bainbridge's English Composition Website*. Web. 05 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.compclass.us/yre/against.html>>. **1530L**
- "Arguments in Favor of Year Round Education." *Ms. Bainbridge's English Composition Website*. Web. 05 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.compclass.us/yre/for.html>>. **1470L**
- Magloff, Lisa. "Disadvantages to Year-Round Schools | EHow.com." *EHow | How to Videos, Articles & More – Discover the Expert in You. | EHow.com*. 31 March 2011. Web. 26 Jan. 2012. <http://www.ehow.com/info_8131173_disadvantages-yearround-schools.html>. **1260L**
- Naik, Abhijit. "Year Round School Pros and Cons." *Buzzle Web Portal: Intelligent Life on the Web*. Web. 05 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.buzzle.com/articles/year-round-school-pros-and-cons.html>>. **1460L**
- Schultz, Brigid. "Year-Round School? My Kids Love It. Yours Will, Too." Editorial. *Washington Post* [Washington, DC] 7 June 2009. Web. 6 Dec. 2012. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/05/AR2009060501971.html>>. **1150L**
- "Teachers Count Current Topics in Educational Policy Year-Round Schooling." *TeachersCount*. Web. 05 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.teacherscount.org/issues/yearround/index.shtml>>. **1200L**

Additional Text

- A possible differentiated instruction text for students who need a shorter text than "Disadvantages of Year-Round Schooling" is "Teachers Count Current Topics in Educational Policy Year-Round Schooling." *TeachersCount*. Web. 05 Jan. 2012. <<http://www.teacherscount.org/issues/yearround/index.shtml>>.



GRADE 6 LITERACY IN ENGLISH

LANGUAGE ARTS: WRITING EDITORIALS

ADDITIONAL INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS

The following pages contain a scaffolded student version of this performance task, including teacher instructions. There are three activities that lead up to the performance task to support the students in understanding the content and skills necessary to achieve this standard, but do not allow the students to demonstrate independent mastery of the standard. Therefore, these activities may be used to address individual learning needs or to teach the standards to all students, but not to assess independent mastery of the cited standards.

Student copy of the activities

Get Started student handout

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

You are about to start a small research and writing project. Over the next few days, you will complete three activities and a performance task:

- Get Started: An introduction to the issue of year-round schooling (One period)
- Gather Information: Note-taking from four informational articles (Two periods)
- Organize Your Editorial: Outlining your editorial (One period)
- Draft Your Editorial: Drafting your editorial (Two periods)

Get Started

A video and an article will introduce you to the issue you will write about. As you watch the video “Balanced Calendar – Year Round School” and read the article “Disadvantages to Year-Round School,” you may begin to develop a claim about the issue of year-round schooling. As you watch and read, make notes of any supporting reasons or evidence that you find convincing.

After reading the article and watching the video, you need to develop a claim on this issue.

Write your notes here.

To do this, write your claim (a sentence stating what you think about this issue). Then, write a few sentences explaining why you make this claim.

My **claim** about year-round schooling:

The **reasons** that I make this claim are:

Write your notes here.

Gather Information Student Handout

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Gather Information

Part 1: Take Notes

Today, you have the chance to do more research on the topic of year-round schooling. You have four articles about this issue. Decide which ones will help you support your claim and are important for you to read. As you read, use this graphic organizer to take notes that you think will help you support your claim, and write your editorial. Make sure you include facts, statistics, quotes, and anecdotes. **Write your source in the first column and your notes in the center column.** You may write on the articles.

Type of Evidence and Source	Notes	Relevance/Possible Use (How is this information relevant to my claim?)
<u>Facts/Statistics</u>		

Type of Evidence and Source	Notes	Relevance/Possible Use (How is this information relevant to my claim?)
<u>Quotations</u>		
<u>Personal Stories/ Anecdotes</u>		

Part 2: Build Supporting Arguments

A. Now that you have researched the topic of year-round schooling, re-write your claim. If your claim has changed based on your research, write your revised claim.

B. Based on your research, what are your supporting arguments/reasons? Write them below.

Supporting Argument 1/Reason 1

Supporting Argument 2/Reason 2

C. Go back to the *Part 1: Take Notes* section of this handout and review your notes. As you look at each piece of evidence in *Part 1: Take Notes*, decide which supporting argument/reason it relates to, matching the evidence to an argument. Write how you plan to use that evidence in the third column of the graphic organizer.

Organize Your Editorial student handout:

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Organize Your Editorial

Use this packet to plan the structure of your editorial. Include the facts, quotes, and statistics that you found during the *Gather Information* task. Before you begin, look over your work in the *Part 2: Build Your Supporting Arguments* section of the *Gather Information* handout to remind yourself of your claim, supporting arguments/reasons and how you planned to use your evidence.

A. Introduction

What type of engaging opening will you use? Will you use an anecdote about yourself or somebody else?

Write your anecdote (or other opening) here, crafting it into a few interesting sentences. Create a clear connection between your opening and your editorial topic.

Background information your audience will need to understand your topic and its importance.

Claim

B. Supporting Arguments/Reasons

Supporting Argument #1 / Reason #1	
Evidence to back up Supporting Argument #1 / Reason #1	Source Information (Name of publication and author, URL, date written, date read)
Supporting Argument #2 / Reason #2	
Evidence to back up Supporting Argument #2 / Reason #2	Source Information (Name of publication and author, URL, date written, date read)

C. The Other Side (Optional)

What is the other side's position (the claim made by the people who disagree with you)?

What is your counterclaim (why are they wrong)?

D. Conclusion

Summarize your claim.

Give your audience a “call to action.” Now that you have convinced them that your claim is the correct one, what should they do about it?

Write one or two closing sentences using a passionate, forceful tone.

Teacher instructions

General introduction to tasks

Administration guidelines: This assessment consists of four tasks and will take approximately six periods – spanning four to six days depending on your students’ stamina and your schedule.

- Get Started: An introduction to the issue of year-round schooling (One period)
- Gather Information: Note-taking from four informational articles (Two periods)
- Organize Your Editorial: Outlining your editorial (One period)
- Draft Your Editorial: Drafting your editorial (Two periods)

General task introduction suggested teacher instructions:

“We are about to begin a small research and writing project together. This project will give you a chance to show how much you have learned about how to write editorials. You are going to learn about a controversial issue, develop a claim about it, and write an editorial that will convince other people to agree with your claim.

We will all be working with the same issue, year-round schooling. You will have to decide if you think that having school all year round is a good thing or a bad thing. You will read articles containing information that will help you support your claim with strong arguments/reasons backed up with evidence.

We will complete the editorial over the next four days, doing a little bit each day. First, you will learn the basic facts about year-round school and form a claim about the issue. Then, you will have a chance to look for evidence – facts, statistics and quotes – that support your claim in articles about year-round school. Because you’ll be writing your editorials based on your research, you’re going to want to take notes that include important evidence that will convince your audience. On the last day, you will draft your editorial using everything you know about argument writing.

This mini-editorial will be different from the editorial you just completed in a few important ways.

- Everyone will be writing about the same topic.
- The process will be shorter, four days instead of several weeks.
- We have given you a head start by doing the research for you.
- You will be working independently.

This whole assessment is designed to give you a chance to show everything you have learned about argument writing during the Editorials unit. It will also help me to learn what the students in this class need to learn next to become even stronger writers.”

Get Started

- Estimated time required: 30-40 minutes
- Distribute “Disadvantages to Year-Round School” article, the Editorials Rubric, and the *Get Started* student handout
- Give verbal instructions
- Show the video “Balanced Calendar” twice
- Give students time to read the article and make notes
- Review the *Editorial Rubric*, introducing the dimensions and the criteria for a top rating
- Collect *Get Started* handout at end of period

Get Started suggested teacher instructions:

“Today, we will learn the basic facts about year-round schooling and develop our claims.

We will watch a video – twice – and read an article that will give you an introduction to the issue of year-round schooling. You’ll learn exactly what year-round schooling means and begin to learn some of the arguments/reasons for it and the arguments/reasons against it. As you watch the video “Balanced Calendar” and read the article “Disadvantages of Year Round Schooling,” you may start to form a claim about the issue of year-round schooling. As you read and watch, make notes of any supporting arguments/reasons or evidence that you find convincing.

After watching this video and reading this article, you need to develop a claim on this issue. To do this, you will write your claim, what you think about this issue. You will also write a brief explanation of why you make that claim.”

After students take notes: “You’ve received a copy of the rubric that I will be using to assess your work on this editorial. You can also use the rubric to evaluate your own work. Every time we do a little more on this project, take a look at the rubric and ask yourself what else you need in order to get a high rating.”

Gather Information

- Estimated time required: 90 minutes (*Gather Information* can be done during 2 periods, either consecutive periods or separate periods on consecutive days.)
- Distribute a packet with the following texts:
 - “Year-Round School? My Kids Love It. Yours Will, Too.”
 - “Year-Round Education-Arguments in Favor”
 - “Year-Round Schools Pros and Cons”
 - “Year-Round Education-Arguments Against”
- Distribute *Gather Information* Student Handout
- Redistribute completed *Get Started* handout
- Give verbal instructions – Part 1: Take Notes
- Twenty minutes before the end of the (second) period, give verbal instructions for Part 2: Build Your Supporting Arguments
- Collect *Get Started* and *Gather Information* handouts at end of task

Gather Information Part 1: Take Notes suggested teacher instructions

“Today, you have the chance to do more research on the topic of year-round schooling. You will receive four articles about this issue to read. Some of these articles contain information supporting year-round schooling and some contain information against year-round schooling. You may not need to use information from all four articles to support your claim. As you read them, take whatever notes you think will help you support your arguments/reasons and write your editorial. You may write on the articles, as well as take notes.

You can take your notes on the graphic organizer provided. Be sure to make notes about where you collected your information. As you are taking notes, remember to either paraphrase what you read or show that you are taking a direct quote from the source by using quotation marks.

If you did not decide on a claim last time, you should begin by doing that today.”

Gather Information Part 2: Build Your Supporting Arguments suggested teacher instructions

“The Build Your Supporting Arguments part of this task has three sections; A, B and C.

For section A: Now that you have had a chance to learn more about the issue of year-round schooling, you may find that your claim has changed. If so, write your revised claim in the *Build Your Supporting Arguments* part of your handout.

For section B: All students should write their supporting arguments/reasons. Thinking about everything you have learned, decide what are the most convincing supporting arguments/reasons to back up your claim. Make sure that your supporting arguments/reasons are two separate reasons and not just two different ways of saying the same thing.

For section C: You will return to the *Take Notes* part of the handout and review your notes. As you look at each piece of evidence in *Part 1: Take Notes*, decide which supporting argument/reason it relates to, matching the evidence to an argument. Write how you plan to use that evidence in the third column of the graphic organizer. These notes will be very helpful when you go to outline your editorial.”

Organize Your Editorial

- Estimated time required: 45 minutes
- Distribute *Organize Your Editorial* student handout
- Redistribute completed *Get Started* and *Gather Information* handouts
- Give verbal instructions
- Collect completed *Get Started*, *Gather Information* and *Organize Your Editorial* handouts at end of period

Organize Your Editorial suggested teacher instructions:

“You began this process by learning the basics of year-round schooling. You continued by researching the topic in-depth. Today, you will be taking everything you learned about year-round schooling in the last two days and using that information to plan the structure of your editorial. The *Organize Your Editorial* graphic organizer will help you to organize your introduction, your supporting arguments/reasons and evidence, and finally your conclusion. Try to complete all parts of the graphic organizer during the time allotted so that you can concentrate on drafting your editorial during the last task. Don’t forget to take a look at the Editorial Rubric to see if your editorial is on track.”

Draft Your Editorial suggested teacher instructions:

“Over the last few days, you have researched your issue and planned the structure of your editorial. Today, you will be writing your piece. Use your completed graphic organizer and your research notes to draft a full editorial. Remember, you want to convince your readers to agree with your claim.

Be sure to include:

- An engaging opening
- Background information that introduces your topic
- A clear claim
- Two separate supporting arguments/reasons, with effective matching evidence from reliable sources
- Words, phrases, and clauses to clarify the relationships among claims and reasons
- Citations that show the sources of your evidence
- An explanation of the other side and a strong counterclaim (optional)
- A call to action in your conclusion

When you are finished with your first draft, be sure to check your writing for correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Then compare your draft to the rubric, to see whether there is anything you need to add or improve.”