Argumentation

READI interventions focus on both the analysis of single texts and comparative analyses across several texts. The targets of argumentation address what Hillocks (Hillocks and Ludlow 1984) calls author generalizations (e.g. interpretations of theme or what the reader thinks the text is saying about the world beyond the text) and structural generalizations (e.g. examinations of how authors use structure and language in order to convey meanings; both what the text conveys as well as how the text conveys). The focus on how the text conveys typically addresses how authors go about creating structures and ways of using language that convey meanings that are symbolic, ironic, satiric, or evidence of unreliable narration; or how choices made by the author in language and structure convey some dimension of theme (e.g. what actions, structures, language convey the idea that this is a particular kind of coming of age story).

Argumentation is both oral and written, conveyed both individually as well as through dialogic discussion with others. In this practice, we draw from extensive research on how to structure dialogic discussions in classrooms (Strong and Strong 1996, Nystrand 1997, Michaels, O'Connor et al. 2008, Haroutunian-Gordon 2009) as well as orchestrating classroom discussions that draw on students' everyday language practices (Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez et al. 1999, Lee 2005). The analytic practices and the oral discussions are intended as preparation for writing arguments.

The focus on helping students learn to write extended arguments draws from several bodies of work: Toulmin's articulation of the structure of arguments as entailing claims, evidence, backing, warrants, counter claims, conditional arguments, and nested arguments; Hillocks (1995, 1999) research on teaching students how to derive claims, evaluate evidence, offer warrants and backing. The core practices around teaching argumentation involve supporting students in examining data sets and scenarios from which they examine what is often competing evidence in order to articulate a claim and then argue for the evidence that supports the claim and the reasons (e.g. warrants and backing) that someone else should believe that the evidence supports the claim. Examples of such scenarios can be found in Hillocks as well as Treat and Hornstein (1991). These are often, but not necessarily, data from crime scenes where students are expected to act as detectives. One important point made by Hillocks is that students are more likely to write well reasoned arguments if they have from the beginning access to data that can serve as sources of evidence. Besides the published scenarios, teachers can also construct their own data sets and scenarios on topics that may be relevant to policies in school or challenges students face. Hillocks argues for three kinds of arguments: forensic arguments which entail getting the facts; arguments of judgment in which students use criteria for evaluating available evidence in order to reach a judgment (e.g. a claim) and arguments of policy. Our

focus is on forensic arguments and arguments of judgment. Forensic arguments for this project include gathering data from the story (e.g. what all do we know about Pauline as a mother in The Bluest Eye) and arguments of judgment (e.g. on the basis of what criteria do we evaluate how Pauline came to be the kind of mother she was/ and what kind of mother was she).

Students begin their initial writing of arguments based on the data in these scenarios and data sets. Teachers use and students self-reflect using rubrics developed by the project for evaluating arguments. The rubrics focus on both the structure and reasoning within the argument as well as use of appropriate grammar, punctuation, word choice, sentence structure, and logical organization. Students then go on to use the skills they have developed in constructing arguments orally and in written essays to the analysis of cultural data sets and of stories reflecting themes generated from gateway activities and then the canonical texts in the units of instruction.

Considering that our targets for growth, represented in the pre-post assessments we use, focus on evaluating students' abilities to interpret literary texts in terms of author generalizations (e.g. theme) and structural generalization (e.g. analysis of how the author goes about structuring the text and using language to convey meanings beyond the literal), it is imperative that across any given unit of instruction students have multiple opportunities to construct orally and in writing such arguments. It is also important to note that the pre-post assessments involve not only engaging in such complex analyses of a single text, but to compare and contrast across several texts (e.g. comparing how two different texts address a particular theme and **how** authors go about using particular rhetorical strategies for conveying theme and characterization). These complex interpretive tasks involve not only the ability to reason about texts individually, but equally important to know how to examine points of similarity and difference across texts, how to use evidence to support claims about such points of similarity and difference across texts, and to structure their writing in a logical way in order to convey comparison and/or contrast. This rhetorical problem of constructing a comparison/contrast argument may involve the choice to make the argument for one text, then for the second text, and finally to summarize points of similarity and difference; or it can involve in each paragraph arguing for a particular point of similarity and difference. This is not easy to accomplish and therefore students need both multiple opportunities to write such essays, and also explicit attention on matters of organization. They also need multiple opportunities to revise their written essays in order to gain competence in editing and proofing their writing in order to become most persuasive to an external audience.