

Teaching Argumentation

The ARE model for teaching and reinforcing argument can be used across the curriculum for teaching students to make sure that their ideas are complete and fully supported. Some teachers may have a poster supporting ARE in their classroom, and encourage students, in classroom discussions and in written assignments, to use ARE for points that they make. The same is true for 4-step refutation, discussed in the next section of this booklet. The basic debate skills, argumentation, refutation, and note taking, are also basic skills for school success. Public speaking and research are also basic debate skills, and can help students succeed in school.

One way to help students learn and apply ARE is by teaching them to analyze advertisements. All advertisements make an argument -- usually, that the viewer, listener, or reader, should purchase the product being advertised. Students can use ARE to “unpack” advertisements, and you might couple a media literacy lesson with an ARE chart like this one, encouraging students to take an ad and break it into its component parts. Bear in mind that most advertisements *imply*, rather than state explicitly, their reasoning and evidence.

Name: _____

Assertion:

Reasoning:

Evidence:

Another way to reinforce the ARE model is to help students to fill in the parts of ideas for different kinds of arguments and ideas. You might give students different kinds of assertions, and have them fill in the reasons. Or you might give them the assertions and reasons, and have them fill in the evidence. A more sophisticated approach might present students with evidence and reasoning, and have them deduce the conclusion. A mixed approach is shown in the chart that follows, where students are asked to fill in the missing boxes, applying both induction and deduction. This kind of approach teaches a sophisticated array of logical reasoning.

	Assertion	Reasoning	Evidence
1	The minimum driving age should be raised to 18.	Raising the driving age will save lives by reducing accidents.	16-year-old drivers have three times as many crashes as drivers aged 18 and 19.
2	Television is a bad influence.	Television shows too much violence.	
3	The United States should not have the death penalty.		Since 1973, 108 people in 25 states have been released from death row because they were found innocent.
4		Eating junk food is bad for your health.	Junk foods are high in fat and sugar. Too much fat and sugar puts you at risk for diabetes and heart disease.
5		Allowing younger people to vote would increase their involvement in politics and society.	
6			Incidents of school violence have shown that students use their cellular phones to notify police and parents.
7	Schools should not use animal dissection in classes.		