

## TEXT-BASED ARGUMENTATION

### Abstract

This study presents a descriptive analysis of 71 video-taped lessons taught by 34 highly-regarded secondary English language arts, history, and science teachers, collected to inform an intervention focused on evidence-based argumentation from multiple text sources. Observations coincided with the onset of literacy reforms emphasizing close reading of complex texts and argumentation across the disciplines. Studying the practices of highly regarded teachers is valuable for identifying promising practices and surfacing stubborn obstacles to reform. We found that while these highly-regarded teachers allocated three times more class time to working with text than to teacher lecture and explanation, opportunities for students to engage in text-based argumentation with multiple sources were rare. Furthermore, working with text was no guarantee of a literacy focus: less than a third of the time allocated to working with text engaged students in active meaning making from text. When literacy tasks did occur, they were associated with a disciplinary knowledge focus, challenging the notion that literacy activity occurs at the expense of content instruction. We also found evidence that argumentation can serve as a lever to raise the level of literacy learning opportunities offered to students. Close reading and cross-textual analysis frequently co-occurred with one another and with argumentation, suggesting intervention designs should include these "building blocks of argumentation." Disciplinary differences in opportunity to learn indicate that norms of instruction may carry greater weight than disciplinary norms of evidence, reasoning, and discourse, and suggest that a particular focus on transforming literacy instruction in science may be warranted.