

Supporting Teachers in Argument Writing Instruction at Scale: A Replication Study of the College, Career, and Community Writers Program (C3WP)

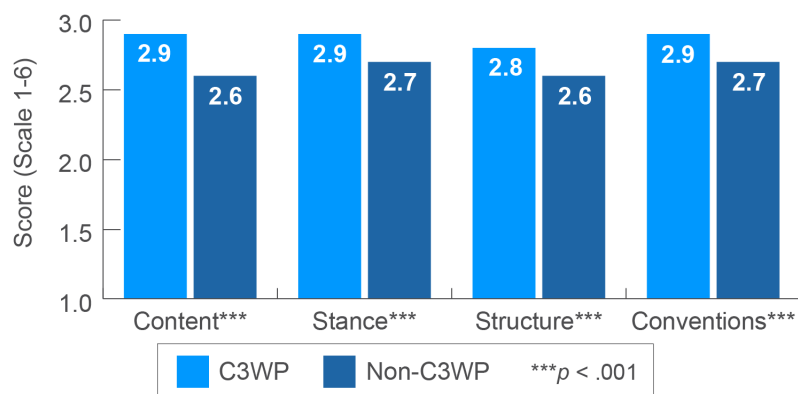
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This large-scale randomized experiment found that the National Writing Project’s (NWP’s) College, Career, and Community Writers Program (C3WP) improved secondary students’ ability to write arguments drawing from nonfiction texts.

What impacts did C3WP have on student achievement?

The study team collected and scored student writing from an on-demand argument writing task similar to those in some state assessments. At the end of the year, students in C3WP districts outscored students in comparison districts by about 0.24 on a 1- to 6-point scale on each of the four measured attributes (see graph). On average, these effects are equivalent to moving a student from the 50th percentile of achievement to the 58th percentile of achievement.

Impacts of 1 Year of C3WP on Four Attributes of Students’ Source-Based Argument Writing, Grade 7–9



C3WP: An approach to teaching argument writing

In the 23 districts assigned to receive C3WP, local Writing Project sites provided grade 7–9 English language arts teachers with 1 year (approximately 40 hours) of C3WP professional development. C3WP is a skills-based approach to improving students’ ability to write source-based arguments. C3WP has three components designed to support classroom implementation: (1) intensive professional development for teachers; (2) instructional resources that sequence key skills for argument writing; and (3) formative assessment of student writing intended to inform instruction. NWP designed C3WP to align to college- and career-ready standards that emphasize argument writing and nonfiction texts.

How did we do the study?

At the study’s onset, the study team randomly assigned rural districts to either C3WP or a comparison condition. In most districts, the majority of students received free- or reduced-price lunch. Districts assigned to the comparison group continued their typical writing instruction. The study team measured grade 7–9 student writing outcomes in all 47 districts at the beginning and end of the study year. Randomized designs are considered the “gold standard” for measuring program impact because they ensure that, on average, receiving C3WP training is the only difference between C3WP districts and comparison districts.

The significance of this study

This is the third randomized controlled trial evaluation of C3WP in secondary grades, all of which have found positive and statistically significant effects on student writing achievement. Collectively, the samples in these three studies spanned 228 schools in 20 states. C3WP’s evidence meets ESSA Tier 1 and What Works Clearinghouse standards with positive and statistically significant effects on writing quality and conventions.