

**Final Report for  
University/School Partnership (USP) Projects  
funded by Title II, Part A, Improving Teacher Quality Grants  
USP 13: 08/01/16-07/31/17. S367B160032**

1. **Date Submitted**

December 15, 2017

2. **Project Title**

Teaching Argument-Writing Collaborative (TAWC) 2016-17

3. **Lead University**

Southern Oregon University

4. **Project Director/Principal Investigator**

Margaret Perrow

5. **Names of high-need school districts actively involved in your grant**

District name	# of teacher participants	# of administrator participants
Ashland School District	9	2

6. **Names of other school districts actively involved in your grant**

District name	# of teacher participants	# of administrator participants
Medford School District	20	1

7. **Total number of schools served:** 9

1 elementary    3 middle schools    5 high schools

8. **Total number of in-service pK-12 teachers served** 29

1 elementary    11 middle school    17 high school

9. **Total number of pK-12 administrators served** 3

2 Middle school; 1 High school

(This represents administrators who were actively involved in the project, either working directly with teachers on developing argument-writing rubrics, or attending PLC meetings and spring conference.)

10. **Number of pK-12 students impacted** 840

We measured the direct impact on the 840 students in 29 teachers' classes (one class per teacher) that formed the treatment group for the assessment. However, the actual number of

middle and high school students impacted is far greater (up to 2000), since each teacher teaches multiple classes.

12. **Average contact hours per participant** 90 hours

Time period over which contact hours took place: 12 months

13. **Training was provided by faculty from**

X Schools/Colleges of Education

X K-12 Schools

X Schools/Colleges of Arts &  
Sciences

X Outside facilitators

14. **Number of higher education faculty working with the grant** 8

15. **Number of pre-service teachers impacted** (This refers to the number of pre-service teachers that the higher education faculty has in his/her classes.) 75 (English Education and Special Education classes)

16. **Courses offered were of what length**

Extended workshops/mini-courses: 1 week-long summer institute (40 hrs)

Workshops (½ day): 6

Workshops (1 day): 3

Conference (1/2 day): 1 teacher-led conference

17. **Type of credit offered to participants** Check all that apply

Undergraduate

Non-credit

X Graduate

X Professional Development Units

18. **Total number of college-level credits earned by district participants through grant activities**

5 participants x 3 credits = 15

19. **Total number of district participants in the following categories**

a. Male 11 Female 18

b. American Indian/Alaskan Native \_\_\_\_\_ Asian/Pacific Islander \_\_\_\_\_

Black \_\_\_\_\_ Latino/a \_\_\_\_\_ White \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_ Not Reported X

20. In 2-3 paragraphs, summarize results of your professional development activities to date. Are you on schedule to complete all your planned activities by grant end? Remember that in this final year of USP grants, no cost extensions are not allowed. If you need to make any modifications to your activities or budget, email Cindi Mafit at [mafite@wou.edu](mailto:mafite@wou.edu) with a detailed explanation of the changes you are requesting. See midterm report.

21. **USP Performance Standards**

*Check each of the six USP performance standards your project addressed. Provide a brief status of outcomes for each performance measure you used. (See RFP for performance measures.)*

- Standard 1: Professional development activities provided by USP projects are responsive to the teaching and learning needs identified in school/district continuous improvement plans (CIP) and the required reporting of Student Learning & Growth Goals (SLGGs).**

Multiple data sources were used to determine the professional development needs of the two districts, and inform the design of the project: 1) Discussions with district administrators; 2) Title I and II reports to the Oregon Department of Education; 3) both districts' CIPs; 4) Ashland's "gap analysis" of 11<sup>th</sup> grade writing disaggregated by subgroup; 5) 2014-15 Oregon Department of Education District Report Cards.

Improvement in writing instruction emerged as a primary focus in both districts, with Common Core standard W.1 (argument) as being the most challenging for middle and high school teachers across subject areas, especially in ensuring the success of ELL students. Both districts also identified two specific challenges facing teachers: 1) adapting existing state rubrics for argument-writing to their particular grades and subjects area, and 2) 'bridging' content-area standards and instruction with the Common Core Literacy Standards.

Consequently, professional development focused squarely on teaching and assessing argument-writing (see course syllabus from summer institute, separate attachment), with activities throughout the year designed to deepen participants' understanding of CCSS W.1 (argument) across grade levels and content areas (see calendar, separate attachment). a few examples include:

- With leadership from two Ashland district administrators, participants developed argument-writing rubrics, developmentally differentiated by grade level, and aligned with state scoring guides. In addition to piloting the rubrics in TAWC teachers' classrooms as part of the project evaluation, these rubrics were shared with teachers in both districts.
- One Saturday workshop was devoted to strategies to support ELL argument-writers.
- A team of five teachers from McLoughlin Middle School developed a cohesive, thematic curriculum with argument at the center, which they successfully implemented in their ELA, science, social studies, special education, and ELL classrooms.
- All participants developed and presented a demonstration lesson in argument-writing; teachers were encouraged to design lessons that would address their own teaching needs ('gaps'), as well as the learning needs of their particular students.

- Demonstration lessons led by the science, music, art, and alternative education teachers strengthened those teachers' ability to teach content-related argument-writing, and allowed all participants to experience ways of connecting the argument standard with content in various subjects.

**X Standard 2: Professional development activities provided by USP projects support the development and growth of learning communities that involve novice and experienced teachers, administrators, and higher education faculty in collaborative interactions focused on improving student achievement.**

Teacher leadership was built in the context of cross-grade-level, cross-disciplinary and cross-institutional professional learning communities that targeted argument writing. There were three levels of TAWC PLCs: 1) the summer institute and monthly Saturday workshops; 2) the April conference; and 3) the school-wide PLCs created by the teacher participants.

During the one-week summer institute and monthly workshops, middle and high school teachers worked together and also collaborated with Southern Oregon University faculty to implement, reflect and refine their teaching practices. Novice teachers, with fewer than two years in the profession, were linked with veteran teachers, and language arts and social science teachers exchanged ideas with science, music and art teachers. During the summer institute, they designed lessons and mini-units to share with their colleagues. The April conference gave an additional opportunity to present and reflect on new teaching approaches; all of the TAWC participants demonstrated new teaching lessons during the conference, and received peer feedback as well as an evaluation from Dr. Margaret Perrow.

PLCs were established formally at Ashland High School and McLoughlin Middle School, and informally at North Medford High School and among the teachers in the Catalyst program at Ashland High School. These PLCs met for the 2016-17 academic year and supported growth and development among the participants, established teacher leaders, and spread the impact of the professional development into the classrooms of non-participating teachers.

The Ashland High School PLC consisted of TAWC participants in language arts and social sciences who had a wide range of years in the teaching profession. The Ashland High PLC teachers told us that their monthly meetings deepened their own learning and also enabled them to share argument writing ideas with their non-participating ELA and social science colleagues during the school year. Two TAWC participants at Ashland High, who were not part of the formal PLC, created a small PLC to collaborate within their own program.

TAWC participants at McLoughlin Middle School created an extensive cross-disciplinary PLC that included novice and veteran teachers as well as school administrators. They developed interconnected lesson plans that centered on the question of nature versus nurture and incorporated argument writing into the 7th grade English, science, social science, special education, and ELL classes. Their success with this comprehensive approach to argument writing resulted in a school-wide presentation and plans for group presentations to other schools in the Medford School District and beyond.

TAWC teachers at North Medford High School provided professional development on argument writing during an all-staff meeting at their school. The North Medford TAWC participants were from chemistry, language arts, social sciences and art, and were able to incorporate a cross-disciplinary and cross-level approach in their presentations, thus reaching their colleagues in all disciplines.

**X Standard 3: Professional development activities provided by USP projects utilize the Common Core State Standards or the current Oregon content standards in the appropriate content area(s).**

All professional development activities were tightly tied to the Common Core State Standard W.1, which requires that students “Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.” The initial weeklong institute in summer 2016 (see syllabus and course outline, attached) had five stated course objectives directly related to this standard:

- 1) Differentiate between types of argument (fact, judgment, policy);
- 2) Explain the various components of arguments (claims, evidence, warrants, backing, qualifications, counter-claims, alternate viewpoints, etc.);
- 3) Evaluate arguments effectively, and teach students to evaluate arguments;
- 4) Improve ability to teach argument-writing in support of Common Core State Standards for your grade/subject;
- 5) Design an argument-writing assignment (including feeder lessons to support it) to implement in your classroom.

Each of the subsequent follow-up workshops focused on an aspect of teaching argument in support of CCSS W.1. Some examples include writing with sources, structuring classroom talk to support argument-writing, logical reasoning, using legal documents in arguments, and constructing arguments in a digital environment.

**X Standard 4: All USP professional development activities incorporate equity strategies to assist teachers, administrators, and other school staff in using practices that will provide all of their pK-12 students – regardless of population grouping or individual learning styles or needs – with the opportunity to achieve excellence.**

The project incorporated equity strategies consonant with the Oregon Education Investment Board’s equity lens. In selecting participants, we sought diversity of teacher perspectives and the students they served: the group included a special education teacher, a heritage language/ELL teacher, three teachers from alternative education programs supporting at-risk high school students, a music teacher, an art teacher, and two science teachers. The inclusion of those alternative and content-area teachers deliberately extended argument pedagogy to non-ELA classrooms (these teachers are often excluded from literacy-focused professional development). When argument is incorporated into music, art, and alternative education classes, for instance, teachers can tap into diverse learning styles in support of CCSS W.1. When the special education teacher and the ELL teacher teamed up with the science, social studies, and ELA teacher at MacLoughlin Middle School, the result was a powerful collaboration that better supports *all* students, but especially language learners, as their teachers are all ‘on the same page’ in terms of teaching argument-writing. The SOU faculty

were also recruited from a range of disciplines, including a chemistry professor and a professor with a background in special education and teaching language learners.

All teachers, regardless of content area or student population they taught, were required to develop and implement argument-related instructional strategies in their classes, to administer pre- and post- student writing prompts, to include in their demonstration lessons explicit adaptations for ELL and special-needs students, and to assess their students' writing using the rubrics developed by participants early in the project. These argument-specific rubrics are another example of a tool to support equitable teaching, as they provide teachers with concrete language and criteria to assess students' arguments in an unbiased way (e.g. not let grammar that marks a student's writing as ELL prevent them from seeing what students *are able to do* in constructing an argument).

Several Saturday workshops focused on equity strategies aligned with the OEIB priorities. One Saturday workshop explicitly focused on strategies for supporting ELL students as argument-writers. Another Saturday workshop focused on strategies for creating inclusive classroom environments that support students with special needs. The final daylong workshop on writing arguments in a digital world showed teachers practical ways to bring argumentation into online and digital formats that students find engaging, while still developing skills in CCSS W.1.

**Standard 5: All USP professional development activities provide significant opportunities for adult learning that is sustained, ongoing, and active.** (All participants must receive a minimum of 60 hours of professional development.)

The project included 90 hours of professional development. All participants engaged in at least 75 hours (a few people missed more than one workshop); the majority participated in all 90 hours. The professional development was sustained and ongoing from June 2016-October 2017.

Forty-six contact hours were provided in summer 2016 (a week-long intensive institute early in the summer, and a day-long rubric-design workshop in August). A series of half-day and full-day workshops was held throughout the year, culminating in the spring conference "Good Argument." The initial week-long intensive institute focused on developing a shared language of argument-writing and argument pedagogy; developing a cross-disciplinary, cross-institutional learning community; exploring theory and practice of argumentation; and forming discipline-specific learning communities. By the end of this institute, each participant had begun work on a lesson or mini-unit in their subject area, either on their own or collaboratively.

Follow-up workshops during the academic year (44 hours) sustained and extended the work begun during the summer, and all project activities were based on active, practice-based learning design. The sustained and ongoing nature of our collaboration allowed us to return to concepts and strategies explored in the summer institute, and refine our understanding. Workshops were divided between whole-group presentations and activities, and time for disciplinary and grade-level learning communities to share and reflect on practice, including honing a demonstration lesson or workshop to present at the April 2017 conference. At that

conference, all TAWC participants presented demonstration lessons to an audience of colleagues and administrators from both districts. These demonstration lessons simulated teaching conditions for the presenter and learning conditions for participants. The May workshop was then devoted to assessing pre- and post- writing samples using the rubrics that had been developed before the start of the school year, engaging teachers in actively assessing the impact of the project on their practice and on their students' growth in argument-writing, while strengthening their ability to evaluate arguments.

Perhaps most critically, based on the premise that to teach writing well teachers themselves must write, participants repeatedly experienced the writing process in a workshop-style environment, engaging in demonstration lessons conducted by their colleagues. Participants' comments (see "changes in knowledge/practice," below) indeed suggest that by coming to understand argumentation *as writers themselves*, they are now better able to support their students.

**X Standard 6: All USP projects evaluate and report the impact of the project professional development activities on participants and, to the extent possible, their pK-12 students.**

Please see the evaluation below.

**22. Evaluation**

*Indicate what type of participant assessments your project performed (participant self-report; classroom observation; interview; closed-ended survey; open-ended survey; pre-post comparison within participant group; pre-post comparison to another group; other). For each assessment performed, indicate results.*

The Southern Oregon University Research Center (SOURCE) provided evaluation for this project and used a robust multiple methods approach, which included closed-ended surveys, interviews and student writing assessments. The surveys were administered to teachers on June 20, 2016, before they began the program (the pre-test survey) and again on May 13, 2017, when they completed it (the post-test survey). The same instrument was used for both the pre- and post-test. A total of 20 middle school and high school teachers completed both surveys and the results are presented below. Also, the program participants, including 28 middle and high school teachers and 5 participating faculty members from Southern Oregon University, were interviewed in June, 2017 about their experiences in TAWC (The Argument Writing Collaborative). The interview findings are presented in the relevant sections below. The findings from these surveys and interviews were used to assess changes in teacher content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge, as well as changes in teacher practice.

The final evaluation component was the student writing assessment. Each of the 29 participating middle and high school teachers identified one or more of their classes in which they had planned on implementing instructional activities that they had created or revised based on their participation in TAWC. It was in this class that they administered a writing prompt in September 2016 (the pre-test writing prompt) and the same writing prompt again at the end of the academic year in May 2017 (the post-test writing prompt). (See the section

“Changes in student learning” below for the wording of the writing prompt.) A total of 740 students submitted a response to that prompt. These were identified as the treatment teachers and the treatment classes/students. In order to control for environmental factors in the schools, we also selected nine middle and high school teachers who were not part of the program and used their students as control classes. The 253 students in the control classes completed the same writing prompt at the same time as the students in the treatment classes. This control/treatment model utilized a pre-test and post-test, which enabled us to analyze changes in student learning outcomes that could be attributed to teacher participation in the TAWC program.

### **Changes in teacher content knowledge and Changes in teacher pedagogical knowledge**

As described above, both changes in teacher content knowledge and changes in teacher pedagogical knowledge were assessed with a survey that was administered before TAWC began and again at the end of the academic year. Although there were 29 middle and high school TAWC participants, the survey results below are for a total of 20 teachers. We could only analyze results for those who completed both a pre-test survey and a post-test survey. Nine of the 29 teachers either joined TAWC after the initial survey administration or did not complete the final post-test survey.

For the pre-test and post-test surveys, TAWC teachers were asked twelve questions about their content and pedagogical knowledge in regards to argument writing. See Table 1 for the questions. For each question, teachers were asked to circle a number from 1 to 5. For question 1 through question 4, the answer categories were 1 for “not well at all” to 5 for “extremely well”. For question 5 the answer categories were 1 for “none of the time” to 5 for “all of the time”. For question 6 through question 11, the answer categories were 1 for “lowest” to 5 for “highest”. For the final question, the answers were “no” (coded as 0) and “yes” (coded as 1).

As demonstrated in Table 1, TAWC teachers reported an increase in argument writing content and pedagogical knowledge after participating in the program. The second column of the table presents the mean or average response of the whole group for each question on the pre-test survey. The third column presents the mean response of the whole group for each question on the post-test survey. The final column presents data on paired differences. For this measurement, we paired the pre-test response and post-test response for each question for each teacher. We calculated the difference from the pre-test response to the post-test response for each question for each teacher, and then presented the mean difference of all the respondents for each question. As indicated in the final column, we found that for all of the questions, except the final one, there was an increase in the mean paired difference from the pre-test to the post-test.

**Table 1: Comparison of Means for Pre-test and Post-test Surveys**

<b>Difference in Means for Pre-test and Post-test Surveys</b>	<b>WHOLE GROUP PRE MEAN</b>	<b>WHOLE GROUP POST MEAN</b>	<b>PAIRED MEAN DIFFERENCE</b>
1. How well do you understand the basic terminology and elements of argument writing?	2.7	4.25	1.55
2. How well do you understand the overall progression of Common Core Writing Standard W1 and what your students need to know and should be able to do, to achieve this standard at their grade level?	2.55	3.75	1.2
3. How well do you understand the difference between basic types of argument (including simple arguments of fact, judgment and policy)?	2.1	3.55	1.45
4. Please rate your present understanding of how evidence leads to a claim, including the role of warrants, backing, and qualifications in supporting claims.	2.0	3.6	1.6
5. How much of your instructional time and assignments focus on argument-writing?	2.1	2.65	0.55
6. Please rate your current ability to help students understand and incorporate multiple or competing viewpoints into their arguments.	2.6	3.8	1.2
7. Please rate your ability to teach students to evaluate others' arguments effectively.	2.35	3.45	1.1
8. Please rate your current ability to frame a problem of interest to students.	2.35	3.9	1.55
9. Please rate your ability to identify real world genres of writing that require argument-writing	2.6	4.05	1.45

skills.			
10. Please rate your understanding of how professionals in your field use argument-writing (e.g. professionals in your field could be historians, scientists, literary critics, artists, book reviewers, musicians, and economists).	2.9	3.9	1
11. Please rate your current confidence in your ability to present a demonstration lesson to your colleagues.	2.3	3.75	1.45
12. In your current teaching practice, do you incorporate material and approaches from other disciplines in your writing assignments?	1.5	1.4	- 0.1

These self-reported changes in teachers’ content and pedagogical knowledge were also evident in teachers’ presentations at the April 14 conference (see conference program). All 29 teachers presented a demonstration lesson or workshop, which was video-recorded (<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0BytjRzvmrV2aNjlqa1BMejNKKVVE?usp=sharing>) and evaluated by Dr. Margaret Perrow for evidence of 1) terminology and elements of argument-writing, and 2) principles and practices of teaching argument-writing that were central to the 2016-17 professional development. Almost all the teachers’ — 28 of the 29 — presentations were strongly and explicitly focused around these terminology, elements, principles and practices. Further, these presentations (which all the teachers had previously tested in their classrooms) demonstrated nuance and sophistication in their approach to teaching argument. All of the lessons/workshops went beyond pro/con approaches to argument, to focus on the thinking, talking, and writing skills of argumentation. This included considering multiple perspectives; using description, definition and criteria; analyzing the values and warrants behind arguments; and building on ‘structured talk’ such as vignettes and role-play to strengthen argument-writing.

### **Changes in teacher practice**

In order to determine whether and how teacher practices have changed, the SOURCE principal investigator interviewed 28 of the middle and high school teachers and five of the SOU faculty participants, at the end of the academic year. The teachers were asked to reflect on their practice and whether they had noticed a change since commencing TAWC. All of the middle and high school teachers had changed their practice to some degree and two of the five SOU faculty had noticed that they have taken a different approach to writing instruction since their involvement with TAWC.

After transcribing the interviews and coding them for themes, we discovered that teachers' practice changes fell into several distinct categories. Six of the teachers explained that they were able to adapt argument writing in a cross-curricular manner, and noticed the positive effect this had on their students in art, math, music, and science. A teacher who works with struggling students summed it up this way:

What I took away from the whole (program), and learning about argument writing, was how important a skill it really is, and how much it teaches just critical thinking. It can cross barriers in terms of content area, and so if a student gets an answer right on a math test, well good, great. "Show me how. What was your process? So, there's your evidence." (It is) the same with social studies and science.

Three of the teachers talked specifically about creating a new curriculum around argument writing. A leader of the McLoughlin group noted that they had a collaborative approach to their newly created curriculum: "Some of us would implement one at one point and the other would follow up and so we had this shared curriculum and strategies."

Others already had argument writing in their curriculum, and found that the TAWC program enhanced their teaching practice by introducing new strategies and approaches, new terminology and new components, or by including more argument writing assignments. Nine of these teachers appreciated the new strategies to engage their students, as this quote from a high school teacher illustrates:

This has helped me be innovative and see argumentative writing in different forms. So, whereas before I was really thinking about argumentative writing as kind of a traditional essay format, I've been able to teach, and have kids create works that are not as traditional, but still have the fundamental components of argumentation.

Three teachers have incorporated the specific TAWC terminology into their existing units on argument writing. Another three teachers, including two SOU faculty, have adapted their approach to argument writing to include TAWC components such as having students fill out an outline in a table form to identify their claim, evidence, etc. Lastly, two teachers have primarily responded to the program by adding more argument writing assignments in their courses.

Four TAWC participants have noticed bigger changes in their general teaching practice. One middle school teacher pointed to the overall benefits to her pedagogy:

Just sort of general teaching practices—the idea of having kids talk more in a classroom. I feel like I do more of that now than I did, and I have more tricks to make that happen. Specifically some of the ideas from TAWC, like my lesson for our conference which was the multiple perspectives, the idea of whenever you're looking at an issue to make sure that you're looking at multiple perspectives. I feel like I do more of that. And, again, I think a few different times this year I had a panel discussion where kids were taking on different roles and that was definitely from what I learned from the readings from TAWC... it's been really great.

### **Changes in student learning outcomes**

As discussed above, we used a control/treatment pre-test/post-test model to determine whether students with a teacher who participated in the TAWC program were more likely to demonstrate increased argument writing skills after one academic year as compared to students

who were taught by a control teacher. The same writing prompts were administered at the beginning of the academic year and again at the end of the year to both the treatment and control classes.

Writing prompt for the middle school:

In today's world, technology has become a huge influence on how we obtain information, and connect with one another. We use technology in class with iPads, Chromebooks, and computers. We also use technology to connect personally with our friends and families through the use of cell phones, social media, and video games.

With so much technology around us, does technology make us less alone or more alone?

Directions

In 1 – 2 pages, answer the question above by writing an essay that clearly makes an argument that technology makes us more alone OR an argument that technology makes us less alone. Make a clear claim, and explain why you believe what you believe using reasons and examples from your own experiences and observations of technology use. Also, make sure that you discuss viewpoints that are different from your own. You will have 40 minutes to complete the essay.

Writing prompt for the high school:

In today's world, technology has become a significant influence on how we obtain information, and connect with one another. We use technology such as iPads, Chromebooks, and computers in places such as school and home. We also use technology to connect personally with our friends and families through the use of cell phones, social media, and video games.

Does technology make us more alone or less alone? Write an essay in which you make a well supported argument that answers this question.

Directions

In 1 – 2 pages, state your argument clearly and present it in an organized manner. Use evidence from your own experiences and observations to develop your reasoning. Make sure to take into account other perspectives. You will have 40 minutes to complete the essay.

We used a number of strategies to avoid bias in the evaluation of the writing prompt responses. Each student was assigned a number and their name did not appear on the response. The treatment and control pre-test and post-test student writing prompts were assessed at the same time and there were no identifiers on the response to indicate whether it was treatment or control, and whether it was a pre-test or post-test response. All responses were evaluated using the TAWC argument writing rubric that had been developed by the entire group at the beginning of the academic year. This rubric evaluated students in the following areas specific to argument writing: claim, support and reasoning, alternate viewpoints, organization, style, and conclusion. Each of these elements was assessed on whether the student had demonstrated

mastery, proficiency, or was not yet proficient. Each TAWC teacher evaluated another teacher’s unidentifiable pre-test and post-test student responses. High school teachers assessed the work of high school students, and middle school teachers assessed the work of middle school students.

In order to determine changes in student learning outcomes, we constructed an SPSS data file for the student writing sample outcome data. Of the 499 students with both pre-test and post-test writing samples, there were 438 usable cases: 367 who received the treatment, and 71 controls. We converted the pre-test and post-test scores, which each had a maximum possible value of 30 points, to percentages out of 30. We subsequently constructed difference scores for each student, subtracting their pre-test percentage score from their post-test percentage score.

To address the question of the treatment’s impact on student outcomes, we performed an independent-samples t-test, comparing the mean difference score for the treatment group with that for the control group. Results are shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Independent Samples T-Test for Difference (Post-Test Minus Pre-Test) Scores, by Control versus Treatment**

**Group Statistics**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Control</b>	71	-1.46	25.49
<b>Treatment</b>	367	7.67	19.50

**T-Test for Equality of Means  
(Unequal Variances)**

t-value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
-2.86	86.54	0.005

The table shows that the control group students, on average, achieved very slightly lower scores (by 1.46 percentage points) at the end of the academic year compared to the beginning. In contrast, the treatment group, on average, gained 7.67 percentage points over the academic year. The t-value for these samples with unequal variances (shown to be significantly different by Levene’s test for equality of variances), was -2.86, statistically significant at the .005 level. Thus, we conclude that the treatment group made significantly more progress in argument writing than the control group. This is good evidence of the effectiveness of the TAWC program on improving argument-writing skills.

23. Provide a short summary (1-2 pages) of your project and its impact now that the project is complete. Include lessons learned if appropriate. If you were to conduct this project again, how would you modify the project's activities or objectives? If your project has produced products, artifacts (including websites), or sub-reports, you should include these in an appendix.

The Teaching Argument-Writing Collaborative (TAWC) brought together 29 middle and high school teachers, and eight SOU faculty, in a yearlong collaborative dedicated to improving the teaching of argument-writing across subject areas and grade levels — and ultimately to improving student writing in this area that is critical for both academic success, and productive civic engagement. TAWC was collaboratively designed by the Oregon Writing Project at SOU, the Ashland and Medford school districts, and the School of Education at SOU. Administrators and teachers in both districts were actively involved in the project design, which was based on both districts' teaching and learning needs.

In spring 2016, middle and high school teachers from all subject areas were encouraged to apply. The group ultimately included teachers from 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, in subjects including English, physics, chemistry, social studies, music, and art. TAWC also included three teachers of alternative education programs, an ELL/heritage language teacher, and a special education teacher. Many were experienced teachers with nearly 20 years in the classroom; others had just begun their careers. They shared an enthusiasm for honing their teaching practice, and a desire to continue learning collaboratively with colleagues. The SOU faculty (from English, Anthropology, Philosophy, Education, Chemistry, and the first-year writing program) collaborated actively in learning with their middle and high school counterparts, and shared disciplinary expertise.

The initiative included a total of 90 hours of intensive, ongoing, and active professional learning over 15 months, beginning with a weeklong institute in June 2016. A series of Saturday workshops during the academic year focused on topics such as the academic-writing needs of English language learners and students with special needs, teaching students to write from sources, and assessing argument-writing. In April, 2017 TAWC hosted a conference on the SOU campus ("Good Argument!"), which was open to teachers from all districts in our region; at this conference, all TAWC participants offered demonstration lessons or workshops on teaching argument-writing.

The qualitative data from the evaluation provides an authentic assessment of lessons learned for the TAWC program. During the evaluation interviews, teachers were asked about which aspects of TAWC could be changed or modified to strengthen the program. The interviewees spoke on a number of different issues. The teachers were mixed in terms of their assessment of having SOU faculty in the program. About half appreciated having the SOU faculty as part of the summer institute, monthly meetings and April conference. A high school teacher commented, "It was good, I think, because I teach seniors. It was really neat to have them there and their perspectives on writing, and what students need to know as writers was really helpful." A middle school teacher stated, "It was nice to see that continuum, and I felt like it

added a lot to the conversation.” The other half of the teachers were less sure of the value of having faculty involved. A high school teacher said that presentations from her own peers were more valuable because the faculty were “disconnected” from the strategies necessary to teach in secondary education. A middle school teacher would have liked to work more with the SOU faculty member in his discipline, but “We just didn’t have the connection.” Another high school teacher was blunt in his assessment, which reflected the concerns brought up by four of his peers:

It was just a standup lecture. I mean, it was what you’d expect from a college professor, but that is not what I do. I cannot do that -- it is not good practice with high school students. There was so little engagement in those lectures, and it wasn’t relevant, really, and not useful.

The positive comments indicate that the presence of faculty can be beneficial to give middle and high school teachers a sense of the long-term outcomes for argument writing. However, faculty would need additional coaching on how to effectively meet the needs of secondary education teachers for this component to be successful.

The middle and high school teachers identified a few other areas for improvement. Every single interviewee gave a positive assessment of the April conference and the benefits of presenting their own lesson plans and being able to observe and participate in the demonstration lesson plans of their peers. The only negative about the conference was the structure; with three parallel tracks, participants expressed frustration that they could only attend less than one-third of their colleagues’ presentations. In terms of the monthly meetings, about half of the interviewees felt the Saturday morning sessions were valuable in terms of the subject matter and schedule. The concerns of the other half included the desire for more teacher collaboration time, less frequent meeting time, and the lack of useful data and organization of the special education presentation.

The impact of the project continues in 2017-18 and beyond. Six TAWC teachers presented workshops for colleagues at the Medford District’s “back to school” professional development days in August, 2017. Two TAWC teachers went on to facilitate the College-Ready Writers’ Program in 2017-18, leading a group of 17 colleagues in argument-writing pedagogy. Another two TAWC teachers will lead a second College-Ready Writers’ Program for colleagues at their high school, as we scale up that project in 2018-19. Six will present sessions at the spring conference of the Oregon Council of Teachers of English in April, 2017. Under the ongoing leadership of a TAWC teacher, the McLoughlin middle school team of five teachers has developed a second cross-content-area thematic unit, with argument at its core, which they are implementing in 2017-18.

This project illustrates the powerful impact of professional development that doesn’t just build skills and knowledge (see “changes” above), but also simultaneously builds **professional learning community** and **teachers’ leadership capacity**. Again and again during this project, we experienced the powerful impact of a developing learning community where people are willing to take risks and try new things; question, challenge and support each other; express and explore areas of uncertainty; dive into new concepts, and so on. The fact that TAWC’s impact is extending into 2017-18 and beyond (see paragraph above) attests to the leadership capacity that participants were able to build, along with pedagogical skills and content

knowledge, enabling them to go back to their schools (both formal and informal PLCs), districts and professional conferences, and share their growing expertise with colleagues. In other words, this project was especially powerful because it went *beyond* skills- and knowledge-development in individual teachers, simultaneously developing a strong professional learning community, and teachers' willingness and ability to take on new leadership roles around the teaching of argument-writing. Without this University-School Partnership grant funding, which supported this kind of sustained, intensive, iterative, and ongoing professional development, we would not have been able to do that.

**Appendix** (artifacts for appendix sent as a separate document):

- p. 1 Recruitment flyer and calendar
- p. 3 Summer Institute agenda
- p. 5 Ed 500 syllabus
- p. 8 Fall newsletter "Let's TAWC"
- p. 10 High school argument rubric
- p. 12 Middle school argument rubric
- p. 14 April conference flyer "Good Argument"
- p. 15 April conference program
- p. 17 Sample certificate of completion