

Effective Communicator: Strong Claims



A QUICK GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

CER:

A writing framework

Claim:

strong claims express a clear opinion or answer to the prompt

Evidence:

effective evidence includes information found in the text(s) to support a claim

Reasoning:

logical reasoning explains how the evidence supports the claim

Supporting Students to Make Strong Claims to Communicate Effectively

The Companion Glossary and Support for the *Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) for Reading and Writing* defines the term *claim* as a statement taking a position on what is true, usually one with which reasonable people might disagree. The term is used in the *KAS for Reading and Writing* related to Composition 1 starting in grade 6 and to Reading Informational 8 starting in grade K. In many High-Quality Instructional Resources (HQIRs), students are asked to make strong claims to state an opinion or to establish the focus for an argument. HQIRs may instruct students to make a claim in response to a text-dependent question; therefore, connections can also be made for students to make a claim to answer a question in expository writing tasks. When teachers make connections to a claim's function to answer all parts of the prompt and focus writing to state conclusions, the term *claim* may be used for coherence within the Claim Evidence Reasoning writing framework as a scaffold. Visual representations of staking a flag on a mountain or calling dibs on the last piece of pizza can support students as young as Kindergarten in understanding the role of the claim for opinion/argumentative writing and for text-based writing tasks when students are defending their response.

Connection to Evidence-Based Instructional Practices

Explicit instruction, specific writing strategies and targeted feedback are evidence-based instructional practices teachers should use to support student writing. (Schopf et al, 2026) Explicit writing instruction supports student learning and provides clarity for what success looks like. Teachers should examine the grade-level progression for facilitating instruction on strong claims and topics using KAS. The *KAS Composition Rubrics* further clarify grade-level learning outcomes. For example, in grades K-5 students are expected to make and *maintain* the opinion in Opinion Writing; however, starting in grade 6, the KAS Argument Rubric outlines that students make and *develop* claims. Grades K-12 *introduce and develop the topic* according to specific progressions in informative/explanatory writing.

Connection to High-Quality Instructional Resources

Teachers should look for coherent language aligned with discipline-specific KAS and local HQIRs. When 16 English Language Arts, Science and Social Studies HQIRs or curricular resources used in Kentucky were analyzed for coherent language across both argumentative and informative text-based writing, *claim* was used in 62% of them. In the remaining HQIRs, more than seven different terms were used for the focus statement or topic sentence in writing to inform or explain, while claim was used universally across grade levels for opinion/argumentative writing. If multiple words are used across the resource, prioritize KAS language to align instruction with state standards. For example, *topic sentence* is used consistently in C.2; however, *thesis statement* does not appear in KAS standards. See [Strong Claims in my HQIR](#) for examples.

What makes a strong claim?

The *KAS Composition Rubrics and Conferencing Guides* state or infer that a claim needs to be clear in all grades K-12. Therefore, teachers should support students to use specific language of the prompt to ensure clarity. Claims and/or topics are not simply a restatement of the prompt but include a clear opinion or answer to the prompt. The HQIR may have students restate the prompt and answer the question in one concise sentence. Teaching students to use specific language of the prompt may help them avoid vague references that limit clarity. Avoiding personal pronouns in claims is a consideration because it is stronger to state a claim than to include "I think" or "I believe" with it. Additionally, strong claims preview the ideas that the readers can expect in the body paragraphs. See examples of strong claims related to specific prompts in your HQIR.

*[References](#)



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