

Figure 5.9: Argumentation Characteristics

Argumentation Characteristics		
Characteristic Elements	Question Prompts	Example
Claim	What do you believe?	Requiring students to wear school uniforms would rob them of their individuality and cause discontent.
Grounds (reason)	Why do you think your claim is true? Why should I believe you?	The mandate to wear uniforms denies students freedom of expression.
Backing and warrants (evidence and elaboration)	How do you know this is true? What is your evidence, and how does it connect to your claim?	In the 1970 case <i>Richards v. Thurston</i> , the U.S. First Circuit Court of Appeals sided with a boy who refused to cut his hair shorter stating “compelled conformity to conventional standards of appearance” does not “seem a justifiable part of the educational process” (United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, <i>Richards v. Thurston</i> , ahcuah.com , April 28, 1970). Upholding the boy’s right to keep his hair long provides a clear defense for how students should be able to make their own decisions about what clothing to wear.
Qualifiers (counterargument)	What are the opposing views and their weaknesses?	Proponents of mandatory school uniforms believe students can express themselves in other ways, for example through hairstyles, nail polish, backpack accessories, or shoes. However, these other means of individuality might have the reverse effect by increasing peer pressure or even encouraging theft.