We anticipate that the proposed research will extend the current knowledge base by (a) describing how the linguistic skills that support skilled writing (i.e., skills in lexical precision, text connectivity, and writer’s viewpoint) develop in 4th through 8th grades; and (b) informing the design of a developmental framework -- that is attentive to both developmental trends and individual variability — to guide writing research and instruction. The knowledge gained will support the development of pedagogically-relevant tools and strategies to monitor and scaffold the language of academic explanation and argumentation in a future goal 2 study.

We also plan to develop an archive of students writing samples collected longitudinally that graduate students and other researchers can utilize for other analyses. We are unaware of any previous research that has systematically gathered data as extensively in this age group. Doctoral students will have many training and mentoring opportunities while the project is being carried out; however, this archive will allow such opportunities to continue well beyond the completion of the study.

To disseminate the study results to scientific audiences, we will make presentations to professional associations like the American Education Research Association, the Society for Research in Child Development, and the Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness, as well as publish in their scientific journals. To disseminate our results to practice audiences, we will offer presentations and professional developments to districts and individual schools, starting with our partnering schools who participated in the study. SERP (who originally collected the writing data through the IES grant) also has a strong media and technology department that has developed several web-sites that SERP already successfully uses to provide information and materials to practitioners (e.g., http://ccdd.serpmedia.org/research-academic-language.php, http://wg.serpmedia.org/accountable_talk.html). Results from this study will be made available to practitioners on these web-sites.