

Organizing Proposal 2: Using the Declaration of Independence as a Model Composition II

Drafting your informal outline:

Create a plan for how you will address each element of the paper. Outline your ideas about what you will write about in each section. Include how you plan to use research to support each section. Your research notes should be in the form of research questions, i.e., the topics you need to learn more about to support your ideas. The research questions in my example are indented and italicized at the end of each section.

Introduction: hook + thesis

Background: the model, ideas, or theory behind the topic

Current situation: where do we stand right now? (sometimes this melds w/problem section)

Evidence of problem: what issues have arisen?

Solution: what action will help solve the problem?

Conclusion: Visualization and call to action

Example: This is what YOUR outline should look like!!!!!! This should take quite a bit of time to create since it considers every section of the paper and the research needed to support main points.

Introduction:

Use a hypothetical description of state testing to emphasize its stressful, time-consuming nature.

Thesis rough draft: States need to create a logical, fair plan for using standardized tests that does not compromise students' education and opportunity.

Theory:

Testing is meant to hold teachers accountable and to ensure that students across the state/nation are learning the same content and skills. Testing is meant to protect students, not to punish them, by upholding standards for their learning.

How did state testing begin? What concerns/events began this trend?

What were the first state tests like? What did they do with the results?

How are state tests connected to standards?

What variations have existed in Ohio's history?

Is education a local, state, or national issue?

How do college-readiness tests like ACT and SAT fit into this picture?

Current Situation:

Describe the state testing situations in several states, including Ohio, Texas, New York, and Florida, to show the similarities and differences in the national situation.

Include information about what these states do with their results and why.

What types of tests do students take in these states?

What age groups test in these states?

How many days out of the school year are devoted to state testing?

What are the stakes of these tests: graduation, credits, school reports cards?

What is the role of the federal government in state testing?

How do these states handle ACT and SAT?

Evidence of Problems

Testing takes up a lot of instructional time and creates stress for students.

State tests do not allow students to show what they know since they are a snapshot of a single day's work out of a school year.

Ohio and other states have changed their state tests so frequently it is difficult to judge their results.

Teachers are teaching to these tests since the tests are their evaluations. This approach does not mean that students are learning more or that teachers are doing a better job.

Education is a local issue; the state and the federal government are abusing their roles.

Testing is repeated because students must complete state tests to graduate but also college readiness tests to qualify for college admission.

Do state tests reflect the kind of work students will do in college? In the real world?

What are the limits of these tests? Does research show that students who do well on state tests go on to do well in college or in their careers and jobs?

What are the consequences for students who do not pass tests?

How often do states change their test and their systems?

Do teachers teach to the test? How much classroom time is spent preparing specifically for these tests? What are teachers NOT doing because of the time and energy lost to testing?

What kind of information about test results is provided to teachers and students? Does it help them do a better job teaching or learning?

Solution

States need to scale back testing or create a system that aligns local testing with state tests and college readiness testing.

Are there any states that use a system that aligns semester/final exams with state tests?

How do other nations use state tests? What do they do to hold teachers accountable and ensure students receive a quality, equitable education?

How can these tests result in meaningful feedback for teachers and students?

Do any states use the ACT or SAT in place of state tests?

Visualization and Call to Action

Ohioans need to demand reform in order to rein in state testing and change it from a consuming monster to a system of meaningful feedback for teachers and students.

Organizing Proposal 2: Using the Declaration of Independence as a Model Composition II

How can students and parents show their discontent with testing? What happens to a student if he or she refuses to take a test?

How can teachers and local administrators show their discontent? How can they work from within the system to make meaningful changes?