

Argument, Level I, Proficient for Middle of 6th Grade to Beginning of 7th Grade

1117 8th Avenue
Smithville, _____

February 16, 2003

_____ State Board of Education
c/o _____ Department of Education
State Office Building
201 East College Street
Capital City, _____

Dear Board Members:

I am responding to rumors of elimination or limitation of social studies and science programs in primary and elementary grades. Smithville has already announced to principals and others that we will be focusing on language arts and math. Since kindergarten I have had teachers that believe that science and social studies are important to maturity and expansion of the mind.

I think the purpose of public education is to teach and prepare children for citizenship in our democracy. Schools shouldn't focus on just reading, writing, and math all day because social studies and science are a great part of understanding reading and writing. I know that reading and writing skills are essential, but it is also important to measure up the value of science and social studies with reading and writing. My belief is that skills plus content equals a total curriculum (*skills+content=total curriculum*).

If you don't agree with me on this then maybe you should refer to Dr. E. D. Hirsch:

"The current emphasis on skills in the primary grades,...has caused American education to decline in absolute terms, as measured by standardized test scores, and also in relative terms, as measured by comparisons with the achievements of children from other countries."

In conclusion, as a student who has benefited from a solid combination of science, social studies, and language arts, I encourage you to reconsider the importance of social studies and science programs in the elementary grades.

Your concerned fifth grader,

Quincy Armstrong

cc: Mr. Tommy Paris, Smithville Schools, Superintendent
Mr. Garrett Riso, Smithville Schools, Associate Superintendent
Smithville Schools School Board Members

I. Letter to State Board of Education

(Letter sent to State Board of Education; child initiated, researched, wrote, revised and edited this letter with no teacher support other than providing the address. The identifying information has been changed and the state and zip code have been omitted.)

Sample Scoring

Letter to State Board of Education (Argument, Level I2)

Ideas/Content:

1. Creates an argument supported with 3 reasons and examples or cited evidence
2. Demonstrates understanding by writing with a sense of authority

Structure/Organization:

1. Understands the structure of an argument: introduction, stated claim, reasons and evidence (quote and reference demonstrating research), warrant that connects reason and claim, a counter-argument and rebuttal and ending with a conclusion.
2. Understands the structure of a business letter

Voice/Point of View:

1. Establishes formal tone, including the business letter format
Consistently make direct statements in 1st person to establish an authoritative voice

Word Choice/Description:

1. Uses transition words and phrases to link ideas
Uses precise and domain-specific vocabulary

Sentence Fluency/Structure:

1. Uses present, present perfect and future tenses appropriately
2. Uses effective paragraphing, including the quote, though quotations aren't necessary when indenting a longer quote
3. Uses introductory clauses (*If you don't agree with me on this, as a student who has benefited*) making complex sentences; uses compound sentences (see paragraph 2); and uses subordinate clause (*that we will be focusing on language arts and math*)

Please Note: When scoring a paper, begin with the middle column, the Proficient level for the month and grade level. As you look at the bullets for Ideas and Content (for example), if the paper seems to fit the description in the Continuum, then decide if it is Proficient at 1 (minimally developed), 2 (adequately developed) or 3 (thoroughly developed). If you find yourself debating over two levels, choose the lower level.

Read the bullets holistically. It is impossible for any instrument to match bullet by bullet for each paper a student might write. If the

I. Letter to State Board of Education

Proficient column is more advanced, move to the left to the Basic or even Below Basic levels for Ideas and Content. If the Proficient level isn't adequate, then move to the right to the Advanced or Advanced+ levels.

We have only scored 4-5 features as a demonstration. You will likely choose to score different features on different papers according the genre, purpose for writing, or the draft (1st, continuing or final).