



Advanced | Exemplar Essay

Prep Work

Preparing for College in 8th Grade



Claim and Focus

This essay presents a clear claim ("I think that students should begin thinking about college during eighth grade...") that is the continued focus throughout the essay. The whole essay is used to support and develop this claim, as well as discuss the counterclaim ("On the other side of the argument, sometimes children are asked to begin thinking about college during elementary school..."). The response successfully remains focused on the prompt task throughout the entirety of the essay.



Support and Evidence

This essay provides relevant and helpful support for the claim that is made, fully explaining how that evidence is connected to the claim. The essay also offers support for the counterclaim, which helps to further strengthen the writer's original claim. Throughout this essay, the writer demonstrates a thorough understanding of the prompt topic, as well as his/her feelings on that topic.



Organization

Clear transitions are used throughout this essay to create an organizational structure that highlights the claim and the counterclaim ("but instead," "for instance," "on the other side of the argument"). There is a logical progression of ideas (introduction > proposal > explanation > counterclaim > conclusion) that helps the reader to fully understand the writer's purpose and message, and fully support the writer's argument.



Language and Style

This essay demonstrates a high level of formality, using complex sentence structures and a variety of word choices that keep the reader interested ("excel," "propose," "structured plan"). The writer's choice of words, clear command of conventions, and formal style of writing create a very definitive perspective that helps to keep the reader engaged throughout the essay.



Using Exemplars in Your Lessons

Exemplar essays are tools to take abstract descriptions and make them more concrete for students. One way to use them is to print the clean copies of the essays and allow students to use the rubric to make notes or even find examples of important elements of an essay - thesis statements, introductions, evidence, conclusions, transitions, etc. Teachers can also use exemplars to illustrate what each score point within a trait 'looks like' in an authentic student essay. For additional ideas, please see "25 Ways to Use Exemplar Essays" by visiting the Curriculum Resources page in Help.



Preparing for College in 8th Grade

Dear Parents and Students,

It's a commonly known fact that college is a giant stepping stone in every young person's life. However, sometimes you can put too much pressure on those young people to excel at all costs. Some schools and parents of young students are beginning to urge children to begin thinking about college at an increasingly young age, sometimes even as early as elementary school. While being prepared for the next big step in life is extremely important, there is a point when that preparation can cross the line. I think that students should begin thinking about college during eighth grade at the earliest, and should spend their kindergarten through seventh grade years just being kids.

I propose that students should begin a structured plan for exploring their college options during eighth grade. In their eighth grade year, students can begin to consider what kinds of things they might be interested in. This should not transfer over to specific colleges yet, but instead should focus only on the things that they actually like to do in their lives. During their ninth and tenth grade years, students should explore whether those things are still interesting to them, and then do some research about jobs that connect to those interests. Do you love animals? Maybe you could look into being a vet or an animal trainer. In eleventh grade, students should double check that they might actually like that job by spending some time with people who do that work. For instance, if you want to be a nurse, go to the hospital or doctor's office and follow a nurse around for a day. That will show you if you really might like having that job forever. Then in twelfth grade, students should find schools that have majors

that fit with the job they are interested in. They should make sure they have met all of the requirements of that school, and then start to apply. I would suggest applying to at least three schools, just to be safe in case some of them don't accept you.

The plan that I outlined above could greatly decrease the amount of stress and pressure that students just like me would feel during their school years. We all have enough things to worry about, like grades, friends, sports, and homework. Adding all of the college pressure can really make you crazy. By being guided through the process step by step by your teachers or guidance counselors, you could be less stressed, which would be really helpful in school.

On the other side of the argument, sometimes children are asked to begin thinking about college during elementary school instead of like in my plan listed above. This can often cause more harm to them than good. These students will begin to feel stress and pressure during a time when they should be learning their ABC's and playing tag on the playground. This point in their lives is far too early to begin thinking about college majors and minors. The stress and pressure that they would begin to experience during their elementary years because of this unnecessary focus on college preparation will only worsen as their school years go on. If these students experience so much stress and pressure when they are younger, that stress and pressure will get larger and larger as they get older. By the time they reach high school, these overly prepared students will end up burning out, and may not even get into any of the colleges that they are interested in!

Having a plan like the one I wrote above will allow students enough time to really figure out their college plans without giving them so much stress for their whole childhood and teenage years. College preparations should never start in grades kindergarten to seventh grade, but should start in eighth grade. This will give children time to be kids instead of always being pressured to be ready for college. This will give teenagers a structured plan to get ready for college without

them feeling overwhelmed and stressed out trying to figure it out on their own. They can have their teachers, parents, and guidance counselors there to help them figure it all out. College is a huge part of every kid's life, but there is a limit to when they should start preparing for it, and I say that limit is eighth grade.



Notes
