Phase 6 - Evaluating Phase
Writing 421: Inquiry through Project-Based Learning

Comparative or Persuasive Essay Assignment

Task: Individuals will reflect on the process of inquiry through project-based learning and compose a 5-paragraph essay containing an introduction with a clear thesis statement, at least 3 body paragraphs that support and develop the thesis, and a conclusion.

Purpose: In addition to learning the structure of an essay, students will meet the following Writing 421 curriculum outcomes for the Inquiry Unit: to evaluate the product (project) and the inquiry process/plan, to review and revise the personal inquiry model, and to identify ways to transfer learning to new situations beyond school.

Topics: □ A **comparative/contrast, expository essay** that identifies and discusses the similarities and differences between the Inquiry process followed to create your team’s project (planning, retrieving, processing, creating, sharing, evaluating) and the writing process (pre-writing/brainstorming, drafting, revising, editing, publishing).

□ A **persuasive essay** that either promotes or disproves the theory that project-based learning in a group setting is a more beneficial experience for students than traditional, independent learning.

TO PASS IN:

1. A “polished” essay of approximately 800 words.

LESSONS:

1. How to write a 5-paragraph essay
2. Persuasive Writing Techniques
3. Writing Thesis Statements
4. Writing Introductions and Conclusions
Assessment: Individual; summative (See attached rubric)

Process:

1. Choose one of the possible topics: comparative essay or persuasive essay.

2. Brainstorm ideas on the topic. Choose your best 3 main ideas that can easily be elaborated and supported with examples from your personal experience.

3. Develop a thesis statement based on the topic that reflects your specific viewpoint and identifies the focus/main purpose of your essay.

4. Create an outline that shows the 3 main subordinate points you will discuss to prove your thesis.

5. Draft your 3 body paragraphs, complete with topic sentences, supporting details, transition words, and clincher sentence.
   Topic Sentence = Subordinate Point

6. Now that you know what your essay is about, draft an introduction that ends with the thesis statement. Then, draft a conclusion that starts by re-stating the thesis, and ends on a more general note.

7. Create a unique title for your essay that reflects your thesis, not the generic title of the assignment.
   ie. Four Heads are Better Than One: Why Project-Based Learning is the Best Way to Learn

8. Revise and edit the essay draft (self and peer).

9. Apply MLA formatting (page numbering, title page, double-spacing, size 12 default font)

10. Publish (print the typed copy).
Sample Outline for the
COMPARATIVE/CONTRAST ESSAY:

I. Introduction
   i. Opener/ background
   ii. Explain stages of both the writing process and the project-based inquiry process
   iv. Thesis (overall, what is similar? different?)

II. Body Paragraph #1
(Comparing/Contrasting Beginning Stages: “Prewriting” vs. “Planning, Retrieving, Processing”)
   i. Topic sentence
   ii. Supporting details (specific examples)
   iii. Clincher sentence

III. Body Paragraph #2
(Comparing/Contrasting Middle Stages: “Drafting a Paper” vs. “Creating a Project”)
   i. Topic sentence
   ii. Supporting details (specific examples)
   iii. Clincher sentence

IV. Body Paragraph #3
(Comparing/Contrasting End Stages: “Revising, Editing & Publishing a Paper” vs. “Revising & Editing a Project and Presenting it to an Audience”)
   i. Topic sentence
   ii. Supporting details (specific examples)
   iii. Clincher sentence

V. Conclusion
   i. State re-worded Thesis and “tie back” to intro.
   ii. Highlight 3 main subordinate points (brief re-cap)
   iii. Discuss which “process” is your preference and why
   iv. Suggest implications for future use (how might you use either process again in your education? In real life after high school?)

Sample Outline for the
PERSUASIVE ESSAY:

I. Introduction
   i. Opener/ background
   ii. Explain what PBL (Project-Based Learning) is- some research may be required. What theory exists regarding PBL and group work in education?
   iii. Briefly acknowledge the opposition (why might people disagree with you?)
   iv. Thesis (Are you in support of PBL/group work, or not?- State your viewpoint and make reference to 3 main reasons for OR against.

II. Body Paragraph #1
(1st reason why you are in support of OR against PBL/group work)
   i. Topic sentence
   ii. Supporting details (specific examples)
   iii. Clincher sentence

II. Body Paragraph #2
(2nd reason why you are in support of OR against PBL/group work)
   i. Topic sentence
   ii. Supporting details (specific examples)
   iii. Clincher sentence

II. Body Paragraph #3
(3rd reason why you are in support of OR against PBL/group work)
   i. Topic sentence
   ii. Supporting details (specific examples)
   iii. Clincher sentence

V. Conclusion
   i. State re-worded Thesis and “tie back” to intro.
   ii. Highlight 3 main subordinate points (brief re-cap)
   iii. Clincher sentence
   iv. Suggest future implications of PBL/group work being used- or not used- in other settings (ie. other high school courses? Real world examples?)
The Project-Based Inquiry Model

The Writing Process

1. Prewriting: Getting It Together
   Prewriting is everything you do to get ready to write: planning, outlining, studying, brainstorming, interviewing, mind-mapping, note-taking, etc.

2. Drafting: Getting It Down
   Drafting is composing the first draft of your paper. This is sometimes called the rough draft because it’s not important that the draft be perfect. The main thing is to get words on paper.

3. Revising: Getting It Right

4. Proofreading: Getting It Polished
   Proofreading means fixing all the pesky little things: spelling, grammar, punctuation. Get out the fine-toothed comb. Dot all the i’s and cross all the t’s.

5. Publishing: Getting It Read
   Publishing means getting your writing to the audience you intended. That might be just a teacher or a parent. Or it might mean posting it on a blog or in a major publication.