



FEA Ohio 2014 Pre-Judged Essay Competition

I. Contest Purpose

Being able to express one's thoughts clearly in written form is critical to success in almost any field, including education. The purpose of the Essay Competition is to provide students with an opportunity to demonstrate their writing skills, as well as express their views on a current topic in education. The topic for the 2014 Essay Competition focuses on dropout prevention.

This competition is cross-walked with the following Education and Training Career Cluster Knowledge and Skill Statements:

- 2.1.3 Explain the impact of economic, social and technological changes on education and training.
- 2.1.4 Explain the concept, barriers and impact of systemic change in education and training organizations.
- 2.1.5 Discuss inertia, status quo and change forces within organizations.
- 3.1.2 Structure ideas and arguments in an organized manner, supported by relevant documentation and/or examples.
- 3.1.3 Write messages using language that is appropriate for the intended audience and purpose.
- 3.1.4 Use correct spelling, grammar, capitalization and punctuation.
- 3.1.5 Identify positions from relevant research and resources.
- 3.1.6 Calculate and interpret descriptive statistics to communicate and support predictions and conclusions.

II. Eligibility for Entry

Read and follow carefully all guidelines listed on the FEA Ohio 2014 Essay Competition –

III. Procedures

Start by reading "Hunting for a Dropout Solution" by Joan Richardson from the February 2011 issue of Kappan, the official PDK magazine (article included at the end of this PDF document), and then seek out some other resources on this topic to further your understanding.

The author describes one school's solution to the dropout rate but acknowledges that one solution does not fit all. As a future educator, this is an issue you will likely be forced to address. What solutions might you offer? How would you approach a student who has indicated that they intend to drop out? What reasons could you give for staying in school? Devise a plan to implement in your school to help reduce the dropout rate.

IV. Guidelines

Read and follow carefully all competition rules and guidelines listed on the Consolidated Competition Entry Form.

- A. Essays must range from 300 to 500 words, excluding name and title.
- B. Essays must be written in English.
- C. Essay responses must be based on the article included at the end of this PDF document.
- D. Contestants must include references and cite all of their sources of information in a Works Cited list. Please use care to avoid plagiarism; plagiarized essays will be disqualified. Essays without a Works Cited section will also be disqualified.

V. Judging and Awards

Judges will use the Essay Scoring Rubric to award points and provide written comments.

***The top winner will be recognized and will read their essay at the conference. The top essay will be printed in the FEA Ohio Conference Program.**

Submit completed entry by January 10, 2014 and send to:

Ohio Department of Education,
Attn: Patty Griffin, FEA OHIO
25 S. Front St., Mail Stop 505
Columbus, OH 43215.

FEA Ohio 2014 Prejudged Student Essay

Criteria	20 - 18 Exceptional	17 - 14 Innovative	13 - 10 Commendable	9 - 6 Competent	5 - 1 Emerging	Score
Works Cited List	Are there citations within the body of the text and is there a Works Cited List? If no, do not continue scoring.					
Clear Thesis	The thesis is inviting, states the main topic and previews the structure of the paper.	The thesis clearly states the main topic and previews the structure of the paper, but is not particularly inviting to the reader.	The introduction states the main topic, and somewhat adequately previews the structure of the paper and is somewhat inviting to the reader.	The introduction states the main topic, but does not adequately preview the structure of the paper nor is it particularly inviting to the reader.	There is no clear thesis of the main topic or structure of the paper.	
Body Support	Relevant, telling, quality details give the reader important information that goes beyond the obvious or predictable.	Supporting details and information are relevant, but one key issue or portion of the storyline is unsupported.	Supporting details and information are relevant, but one or more key issues or portions of the storyline is unsupported.	Supporting details and information are relevant, but several key issues or portions of the storyline are unsupported.	Supporting details and information are typically unclear or not related to the topic.	
Clear Conclusion	The conclusion is strong and leaves the reader with a feeling that they understand what the writer is "getting at."	The conclusion is recognizable and ties up almost all the loose ends.	The conclusion is somewhat recognizable and ties up some of the loose ends.	The conclusion is recognizable, but does not tie up several loose ends.	There is no clear conclusion, the paper just ends.	
Clearly Convincing	The writer seems to be writing from knowledge or experience. The author has taken the ideas and made them "his own."	The writer seems to be drawing on knowledge or experience, but there is some lack of ownership of the topic.	The writer seems to be drawing on knowledge or experience, but there is definite lack of ownership of the topic.	The writer relates some of his own knowledge or experience, but it adds nothing to the discussion of the topic.	The writer has not tried to transform the information in a personal way. The ideas and the way they are expressed seem to belong to someone else.	
Reflection of Creativity	The writer successfully uses several reasons/appeals to try to show why the reader should care or want to know more about the topic.	The writer successfully uses one or two reasons/appeals to try to show why the reader should care or want to know more about the topic.	The writer makes attempts to show why the reader should care or want to know more about the topic but is only mildly successful.	The writer attempts to make the reader care about the topic, but is not really successful.	The writer made no attempt to make the reader care about the topic.	
Sentence structure, grammar	Writer makes no errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes 1-2 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes 3-4 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes more than 5-6 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	Writer makes more than 6 errors in grammar or spelling that distract the reader from the content.	
Other:	10 point if delivered on time (January 10th)					
TOTAL	_____ /70					

***FEA Ohio is working to align contests and rubrics with National. At this time, scores may vary from state judging to national judging.**

Judge's Initials _____

Date Received _____

Comments: (required)

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Hunting for a Dropout Solution

The principal was new to the high school just beyond the suburbs of a large upper-Midwestern city. He was feeling pretty good about himself when he got the job. Moving to this school was considered a real feather in his cap because family incomes were high, and his salary was also higher than that of other principals in the area.

But once he settled in, he sensed that something was wrong. He couldn't quite put his finger on what was bugging him. But he'd always been a numbers guy, so he privately began to study the data about this new school.

What was wrong, it turned out, was that only seven out of every 10 kids were graduating from this mostly white, middle-class school. And attendance was awful for both teachers and students. He quickly realized that weeks of high absences corresponded with any kind of hunting season — especially deer.

"People pretty much did what they wanted when they wanted," the principal told me.

He kept grubbing away at the numbers and, after a few months, he had created a score for every student by looking at attendance and course failures. Then he made a list of students and drew a line separating those who would graduate from those who would not.

About 200 juniors and seniors in his 1,500-student high school were not on track for graduation.

When he saw that, he told me, he just broke down and cried.

NAMING THE PROBLEM

The principal knew that as the new guy on the block, he'd get nowhere by hammering on the staff about this. Nothing would change until the staff owned this problem. So he invited the counselors and assistant principals to his home for a staff retreat.

In the comfort of his living room, he described the information he'd collected. Then he unveiled the list and dramatically drew a line above the bottom 200 students.

"Tell me what you know about Jesse," he said.

They looked from one to the other. They knew the name but nothing else.

"OK, tell me what you know about Susan."

Nothing.

"How about Juan?"

Nothing.

"Six counselors and three assistant principals and they knew next to nothing about these students. They did not see their job as worrying about these kids. It was more like, 'I am the source of water. If the horse wants to come, that's great. If not, oh well,'" he said.

He went through about 30 students before one counselor, tears in her eyes, finally stopped him. "OK, we get it," she said. "What do we do?"

MAKING CHANGES

When that dramatic moment was repeated with teachers, there was a similar response. From there, the staff committed to remaking the school into a school where every student would graduate.

Counselors were reorganized so that each counselor would work with a student throughout his or her high school years, and each student was required to meet with a counselor twice a year. One staff person was assigned to call the home of every absent student and to talk to an adult about the absence. All students were encouraged to consider dual enrollment courses so they would earn college credit while in high school. The school's web site began reporting academic honors and not just sports scores.

The toughest challenge was reducing absences during hunting seasons. Parents were quite resistant about being told that hunting with a parent was not an acceptable reason for missing school. One parent even sued the district over a tough new attendance policy. Eventually, the message about the value of being in school penetrated, and absences started to drop. The high school now reports an average daily attendance in the 90% range. Graduation rates have improved, but still only about 80% of students graduate after four years.

As the authors in this issue of *Kappan* report, attendance, behavior, and course failures seem to be part of every equation of low graduation rates, regardless of whether kids are in rural schools or urban centers. But local context means that no two solutions can be the same. Every community that grapples with this issue must tear into some painful truths about what keeps so many of its children from walking across the stage at graduation. Only then will the United States, as a whole, be able to stem the tide of dropouts. — JR