**Evidence-Based Writing**

**Writing for History Class**

**(or any non-Lang. Arts class)**

First, get rid of the descriptive, fluff language they want you to use in English class. In history, government, psychology, science and math, they just want you to get to the point. Second, make sure you answer the question. Read the question and underline/circle the key words or commands.

Before you start writing, figure out what information you need to have in order to answer the question. For example: “Was the Great Society a success?” What do you need to know in order to answer the question? No. 1, you need to know what the goals of the Great Society were and, No. 2, what it did and did not achieve (what goals did it meet and what goals did it fail to meet). Figure out that information and write about it and you are well on your way to answering the question. Jot down the information category (goals and achievements) in the margin and start writing down all you know for both. This is your plan that you will refer to when writing. **Remember to plan BEFORE you start to write. Prior Planning Prevents Poor Performance!**

Now, it’s time to write. The structure of your essay should include:

1. Introductory paragraph that ends with thesis statement (or statement of your position)
2. 3-5 body paragraphs that illustrate and support your thesis (position).
3. Conclusion paragraph (just recap main arguments. Don’t introduce new thoughts or ideas).

**Sample question: Which school is better, Vero Beach or Sebastian River?**

**Intro paragraph**: Start with a broad idea that sets the stage or scene. Then give a brief insight into your main arguments, followed by your stance (thesis statement).

*There are two public high schools in Indian River County that have had a rivalry dating back to the opening of Sebastian River High School in 1996. Since then, SRHS has battled against the established Vero Beach High School for dominance in the classroom and in athletics and musical performance (scene-setting idea). Traditionally, VBHS has higher-achieving students in the classroom. VBHS also has a newer, more modern campus and has more district, regional and state championships in athletics and band competitions (insight into main arguments). Therefore, Vero Beach High School is clearly better than Sebastian River. (Thesis statement).*

**Body paragraphs:** These paragraphs follow a simple formula – topic statement (first sentence that states main idea of entire paragraph), followed by claims supported by cold hard evidence. Each paragraph should address one of the arguments you mentioned in your intro paragraph.

*Athletically, there has been no comparison over the past 16 years, in which Vero has dominated Sebastian River (topic statement). In football, Vero is vastly superior (claim). In head-to-head meetings, the Indians have won 4-of-6 meetings (evidence). Vero has also won 10 district championships to Sebastian’s one (evidence). Since SRHS opened, the Sharks have yet to win a playoff game while Vero has won 6 in that time period (evidence). But football isn’t the other place Vero dominates athletically. In girls sports, the Indians also hold a distinct advantage (claim). Just look at the number of team state championships. While Sebastian River recently won its first-ever team title, in 2012 with the girls basketball team, VBHS’s girls lacrosse team has won the past seven state championships (evidence). Vero Beach also offers more sports than SRHS (claim). At Vero Beach, boys can compete in 11 sports and girls in 13 (evidence). At SRHS, boys can compete in just 10 sports and girls only 11 (evidence).*

**Conclusion:** Keep short and sweet. Quickly restate arguments and your main idea.

*While there are many good things about Sebastian River High School, it just does not measure up to Vero Beach. The Indians’ superior performance academically, evidence by the number of National Merit Scholars and higher graduation rate, combined with their athletic achievements clearly illustrates that Vero Beach High School is the better school.*