

PRACTICE THE TASK

Should students be required to stay in school until they are 18?



You will read:

- ▶ **A LETTER**
- ▶ **A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE**
President Pushes States to Raise Dropout Age
- ▶ **A DATA ANALYSIS**
Average Income by Education, 2009
- ▶ **A RADIO INTERVIEW**
Paul Moran Talks with Missy Remiss on WSCH

You will write:

- ▶ **AN ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY**
Should students be required to stay in school until they are 18?

Source Materials for Step 2

AS YOU READ Analyze the letter, the newspaper article, the data analysis, and the radio interview. Think about the information, including the data contained in the sources. Annotate the sources with notes that help you decide where you stand on the issue: Should students be required to stay in school until they are 18?

Source 1: Letter

November 21, 2012

Dear Grandma Ella:

I want to tell you so you don't hear from someone else—I've left school. I know this will disappoint you. I hope after you read what I have to say you will understand.

You know how hard things have been at home for the past three years with dad not working, and mom has only been able to find temporary and part-time work. I've been helping out working at Shelly's Diner, but that money does not go far.

Life was tough enough, but then the storm hit. The diner was flooded and had to close—no more job for me! Mom couldn't get to work on time since the subways were out of whack, and now she's looking for work again. The worst was my school—it took a real beating, so they relocated us to somewhere on the other side of town that takes forever to get to every day.

Rather than spend the day getting to school and back and feeling helpless, I decided to step up and look for a job to really help out at home. I was pretty lucky. I'm happy to say I found a full-time job at Marcy's, starting immediately.

Don't worry, Grandma. I know how important it is to get my education. I plan to get myself settled in this job, and then start to work on my GED. Maybe if I'm lucky and mom or dad finds a good job in the next few months I'll be able to go back to school full-time next fall. But in the meantime, I'm proud to be able to help out at home while we all try to recover from the storm.

Please understand. Thank you for everything.

Love,
Marissa

XXX

Source 2: Newspaper Article

National Education Weekly

President Pushes States to Raise Dropout Age

by Mia Lewis

January 25, 2012

In his recent State of the Union address President Obama called on states to require students to stay in school until age 18 or graduation.

“When students don’t walk away from their education, more of them walk the stage to get their diploma,” the President pointed out.

This is the first time a President has weighed in on an issue that individual states are struggling to solve on their own and in their own ways. In general, the legal age for exiting school pre-graduation has been getting higher over the years. It is now age 18 in 21 states plus the District of Columbia, and age 17 in 11 other states.

Raising the age for exiting pre-graduation may not stop all dropouts, but it has a positive effect, according to New Hampshire Deputy Commissioner of Education, Paul Leather. “What it does is it sets the moral imperative so that students,

parents, and educators become committed to the idea that each student will in fact graduate,” Leather says.

Recently, New Hampshire raised the minimum age for exiting pre-graduation to 18. “What we found both in national and international research is that when you raise the compulsory age of education, the graduation and retention rates will in fact increase,” he says.

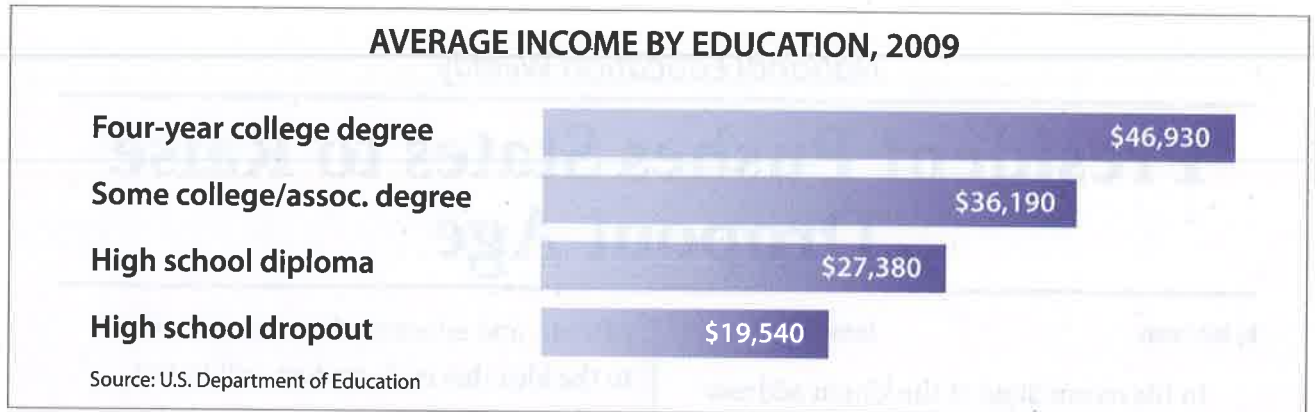
Since the federal government covers only around 10 percent of education financing, it is unlikely to be able to force states to adopt a uniform age for exiting pre-graduation. However, for states wanting to receive special “Race to the Top” education grants, a higher pre-graduation exit age could be a requirement.

The federal government may not be able to dictate individual state policy, but it can give states a strong incentive to make sure more students graduate.

Discuss and Decide

Compare Sources 1 and 2. Explain whether or not Marissa’s decision is well thought out. What is the likely effect that dropping out of school will have on her future? Cite text evidence in your discussion.

Source 3: Data Analysis



Source 4: Radio Interview



Paul Moran Talks with Missy Remiss on WSCH

WSCH interviewer Paul Moran talks with Education Advocate Missy Remiss about how states are tackling high dropout rates.

WSCH: Thanks so much for being with us today. I'm going to jump right in and ask, why is everyone so worried about the high school dropout rate? What's so bad about kids deciding to leave school early?

MR: Well, the problem is that even if a student makes a reasonable decision to leave school for work, that decision is likely to have a negative impact over the course of his or her life. Those without a high school diploma have lower earnings, higher unemployment, lower job satisfaction—they even have a higher likelihood of ending up in jail or on public assistance. So, it really is a bad deal for kids.

WSCH: OK, so why not just require kids to stay in school until they are 18 or they graduate? Can't we do that? Won't that solve the problem?

MR: Well, that's really the question. 21 states plus the District of Columbia already have laws requiring students to stay in school until they are 18 or until they graduate, but some of them still have high dropout rates! And you know, forcing

students to stay in school when they don't want to be there can cause problems for teachers and other students as well.

WSCH: So, raising the minimum school-leaving age doesn't automatically solve the problem?

MR: No. That's why some states have decided to take a different tack. For example, in Kentucky, they have been very successful lowering dropout rates, even though, technically, kids are allowed to leave school at age 16. They've worked hard to make schooling relevant—to offer courses that kids can see will help them get jobs and help them in their adult lives. They also have created several pathways to graduation, so there's more than one way to succeed.

WSCH: So, they're still trying to lower the dropout rate, just not by making it the law that you have to stay in school?

MR: Exactly. Everyone wants to lower the dropout rate, it's just a question of how. Now, if we could only tackle some of the economic and social problems that lead students to drop out, we'd really be able to make progress!

WSCH: Thank you so much for your time, and good luck!

Close Read

1. Cite three reasons for staying in school and getting a high school diploma.

2. Why doesn't raising the minimum age to leave school always lead to higher graduation rates? Cite evidence in the text.

Respond to Questions on Step 2 Sources

These questions will help you analyze the sources you've read. Use your notes and refer to the sources in order to answer the questions. Your answers to these questions will help you write your essay.

- 1 Evaluate the sources. Is the evidence from one source more credible than the evidence from another source? When you evaluate the credibility of a source, consider the expertise of the author and/or the organization responsible for the information. Record your reasons in the chart.

Source	Credible?	Reasons
Letter Letter to Grandma Ella		
Newspaper Article President Pushes States to Raise Dropout Age		
Data Analysis Average Income by Education, 2009		
Radio Interview Paul Moran Talks with Missy Remiss on WSCH		

- 2 **Prose Constructed-Response** What is the relationship between graduating high school and earning income? Cite evidence from at least two texts in your response.

- 3 **Prose Constructed-Response** Which source suggests that dropping out of school might be a valid option for some students? Cite text evidence in your response.

Types of Evidence

Every reason you offer to support the central claim of your argument must be backed up by evidence. It is useful to think ahead about evidence when you are preparing to write an argument. If there is no evidence to support your claim, you will need to revise your claim. The evidence you provide must be relevant, or directly related to your claim. It must also be sufficient. Sufficient evidence is both clear and varied.

Use this chart to help you choose different types of evidence to support your reasons.

Types of Evidence	What Does It Look Like?
Anecdotes: personal examples or stories that illustrate a point	Letter "Rather than spend the day getting to school and back and feeling helpless, I decided to step up and look for a job to really help out at home."
Commonly accepted beliefs: ideas that most people share	Radio Interview "Those without a high school diploma have lower earnings, higher unemployment, lower job satisfaction ..."
Examples: specific instances or illustrations of a general idea	Radio Interview "... in Kentucky, they have been very successful lowering dropout rates, even though, technically, kids are allowed to leave school at age 16."
Expert opinion: statement made by an authority on the subject	Newspaper Article "... sets the moral imperative so that students, parents, and educators become committed to the idea that each student will in fact graduate,' Leather says."
Facts: statements that can be proven true, such as statistics or other numerical information	Radio interview "21 states plus the District of Columbia already have laws requiring students to stay in school until they are 18 or until they graduate."

ASSIGNMENT

Write an argumentative essay to answer the question: Should students be required to stay in school until they are 18?

Planning and Prewriting

Before you draft your essay, complete some important planning steps.

Claim » **Reasons** » **Evidence**



You may prefer to do your planning on a computer.

Make a Precise Claim

1. Should students be required to stay in school until they are age 18?
yes no
2. Review the evidence on pages 12–15. Do the sources support your position?
yes no
3. If you answered *no* to Question 2, you can either change your position or do additional research to find supporting evidence.
4. State your claim. It should be precise. It should contain the issue and your position on the issue.

Issue: A student's age when leaving school before graduating

Your position on the issue: _____

Your precise claim: _____

State Reasons

Next, gather support for your claim. Identify several valid reasons that justify your position.

Reason 1	Reason 2	Reason 3

Find Evidence

You have identified reasons that support your claim. Summarize your reasons in the chart below. Then complete the chart by identifying evidence that supports your reasons.

Relevant Evidence: The evidence you plan to use must be *relevant* to your argument. That is, it should directly and factually support your position.

Sufficient Evidence: Additionally, your evidence must be *sufficient* to make your case. That is, you need to provide enough evidence to convince others.

Short Summary of Reasons	Evidence
Reason 1	<div style="text-align: right;"> Relevant? _____ Sufficient? _____ </div>
Reason 2	<div style="text-align: right;"> Relevant? _____ Sufficient? _____ </div>
Reason 3	<div style="text-align: right;"> Relevant? _____ Sufficient? _____ </div>

Finalize Your Plan

Whether you are writing your essay at home or working in a timed situation at school, it is important to have a plan. You will save time and create a more organized, logical essay by planning the structure before you start writing.

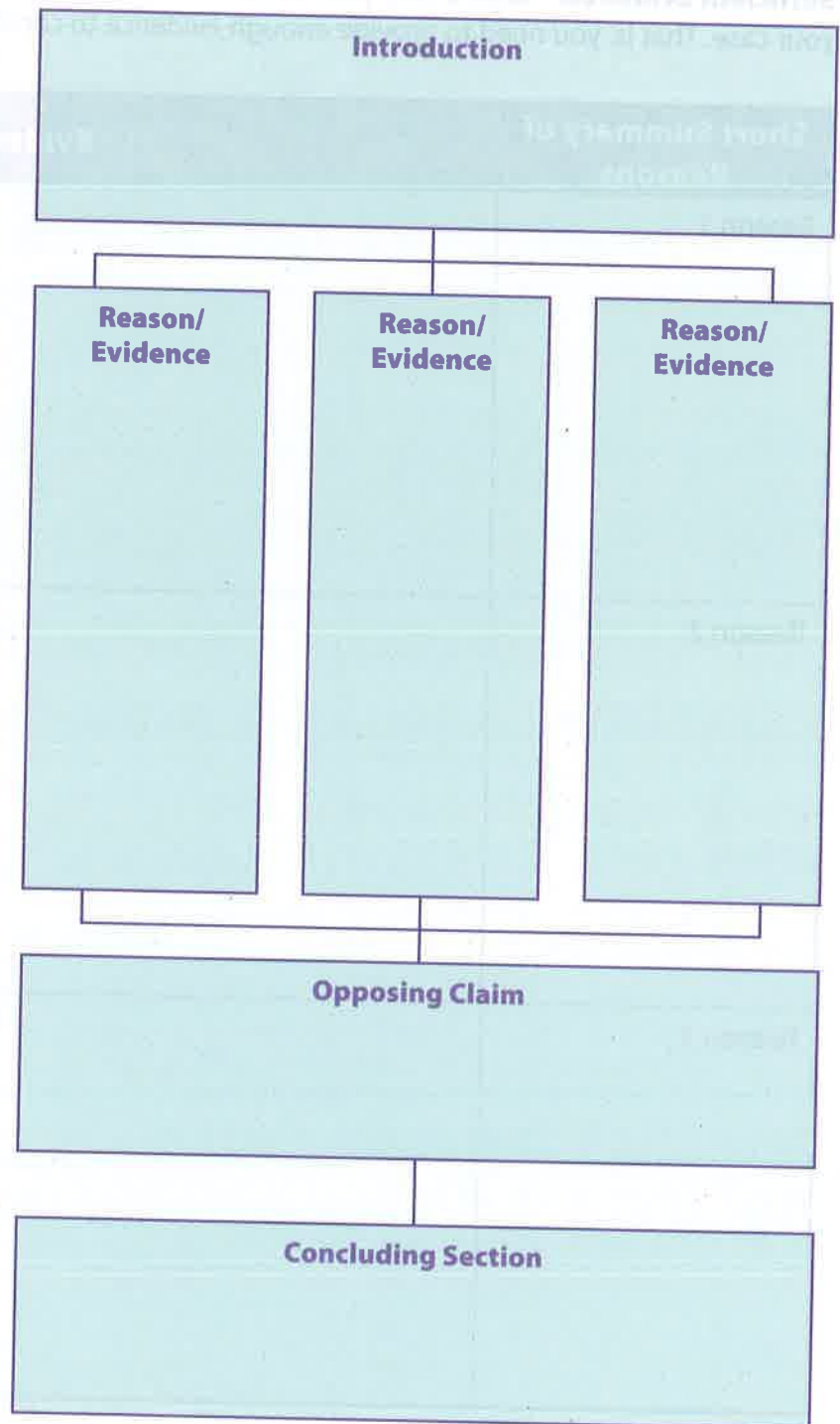
Use your responses on pages 18–19, as well as your close reading notes, to complete the graphic organizer.

▶ Think about how you will grab your reader's attention with an interesting fact or anecdote.

▶ Identify the issue and your position.

▶ State your precise claim.
▶ List the likely opposing claim and how you will counter it.

▶ Restate your claim.



Draft Your Essay


As you write, think about:

- ▶ **Audience:** Your teacher.
- ▶ **Purpose:** Demonstrate your understanding of the specific requirements of an argumentative essay.
- ▶ **Style:** Use formal and objective tone that isn't defensive.
- ▶ **Transitions:** Use words such as *furthermore* or *another reason*, to create cohesion, or flow.

Revise

Revision Checklist: Self Evaluation

Use the checklist below to guide your analysis.

 If you drafted your essay on the computer, you may wish to print it out so that you can more easily evaluate it.

Ask Yourself	Tips	Revision Strategies
1. Does the introduction grab the audience's attention and include a precise claim?	Draw a wavy line under the attention-grabbing text. Bracket the claim.	Add an attention grabber. Add a claim or rework the existing one to make it more precise.
2. Do at least two valid reasons support the claim? Is each reason supported by relevant and sufficient evidence?	Underline each reason. Circle each piece of evidence, and draw an arrow to the reason it supports.	Add reasons or revise existing ones to make them more valid. Add relevant evidence to ensure that your support is sufficient.
3. Do transitions create cohesion and link related parts of the argument?	Put a star next to each transition.	Add words, phrases, or clauses to connect related ideas that lack transitions.
4. Are the reasons in the order that is most persuasive?	Number the reasons in the margin, ranking them by their strength and effectiveness.	Rearrange the reasons into a more logical order of importance.
5. Are opposing claims fairly acknowledged and refuted?	Put a plus sign by any sentence that addresses an opposing claim.	Add sentences that identify and address those opposing claims.
6. Does the concluding section restate the claim?	Put a box around the restatement of your claim.	Add a sentence that restates your claim.

Revision Checklist: Peer Review

Exchange your essay with a classmate, or read it aloud to your partner. As you read and comment on your classmate's essay, focus on logic, organization, and evidence—not on whether you agree with the author's claim. Help each other identify parts of the draft that need strengthening, reworking, or a new approach.

What To Look For	Notes for My Partner
1. Does the introduction grab the audience's attention and include a precise claim?	
2. Do at least two valid reasons support the claim? Is each reason supported by relevant and sufficient evidence?	
3. Do transitions create cohesion and link related parts of the argument?	
4. Are the reasons in the order that is most persuasive?	
5. Are opposing claims fairly acknowledged and refuted?	
6. Does the concluding section restate the claim?	

Edit



Edit your essay to correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.