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THE Big6™ WRITING PROCESS

As a New Haven Public School student, you will be asked to create a variety of writing tasks. You may be assigned to compose any (or all) of the following: persuasive letters, research papers, essays about personal experiences, literary analyses, etc. Though the types of writing vary and the subject matter shifts, there is a standard writing process that will help guide you from the moment a piece is assigned to the moment it is returned to you with a grade, leaving you either very relieved or wondering why you didn’t put in more time.

**STEP 1: GETTING STARTED – WHAT IS MY TASK? WHAT IS MY QUESTION?**

*Determine a purpose and need for information* In order for your paper to be more than a rewrite of the facts you find about your topic in print and online sources, or a summary of someone else's ideas, you need to develop an essential question for inquiry. If written correctly and thoughtfully, the essential question will ensure that you critically and creatively process the information you find.

A topic is a very broad subject that covers vast amounts of information. It is just about impossible to research it enough to cover all of it. And most of the work you would be doing is simply collecting facts.

Essential questions allow us to explore what knowledge is, how it came to be, and how it has changed through human history. It is always poised on the boundary of what is known and what is unknown; it seeks to reach beyond itself.

A question is something you answer after you have collected data or facts on a subject. It requires you to make a judgment based on what you have read on your topic. You develop a question within the area of your topic. You should read some articles or portions of books on your topic to come up with a good question you plan to answer from your research.

At WCHS, we research topics to answer questions. Once you have some background information on your topic and form your question, you focus your research to find supporting details so that you can answer your question.

**Topic:** Drug Addiction

**Essential Question:** Why does the United States Government seek to legally limit drug use rather than allow the population to make their own decisions?

**Question:** Should the United States put more emphasis on treatment for drug users instead of its current focus on drugs as a criminal issue?
STEP 2 WHAT RESOURCES CAN I USE?
Examine alternative approaches to acquiring information. List the best sources to find this information. Don’t forget traditional print and human sources as appropriate.
If using web sites, evaluate them for relevancy, accuracy, and authority before you use them. You will lose points if the sites you use for your research do not meet the criteria.

STEP 3 WHERE CAN I FIND THESE RESOURCES?
Locate sources and access the information within them—where will I locate these sources? Will I need to go to the library at school, the public library? Will I be able to access online resources?

STEP 4 USE OF INFORMATION
Use a source to gain information—How will I record the information that I find? Take notes and highlight.
How will I give credit to my sources?

STEP 5 SYNTHESIS – PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER
Integrate information from a variety of sources—How will I show my results? How will I give credit to my sources in my final paper?

STEP 6 EVALUATION
• Before turning in my assignment, I need to check off all of these items (on the printed Organizer, which needs to be turned in with my paper):
• My final paper is a thoughtful presentation of my essential question and represents my ideas and conclusions
• I have not represented others’ ideas as my own
• Credit is given to my sources, written in MLA Style
• My work is word processed and formatted according to the Wilbur Cross High School required format
• My work is complete and includes a title page and works cited list
• Would I be proud for anyone to read this paper?
Plagiarism

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the act of using another person’s ideas or expressions in your writing without acknowledging the source. To plagiarize is to give the impression that you have written or thought of something that you have, in fact, borrowed from someone else. The Web makes it more tempting to plagiarize ideas because copying and pasting is so simple. However, the Web makes it easier for teachers to check particularly eloquent writing by doing a Google search on your writing in quotes and locating sources that clearly match your wording.

It is illegal, unethical, and if discovered, could result in a loss of credit for the project and perhaps a failure for the course.

Plagiarism can take several forms:

- Copying any direct quotation from your source material without providing quotation marks or crediting your source
- Paraphrasing of a borrowed idea without introducing and documenting the source of the idea
- Copying another paper, either from someone else or your own paper from a previous assignment

You may avoid plagiarism by:

- Acknowledging borrowed material with an introduction (“According to Smith…”) and citing the source page number at the end of the sentence (Smith 24).
- Paraphrasing material by writing in your style and language and citing the source of the information
- Enclosing quotation marks around all material that is directly quoted and citing the source for the information

What is Common Knowledge?

You don’t have to cite everything. Facts or ideas referred to as “common knowledge” do not have to be cited.

Common knowledge includes facts that are found in many sources, facts that you assume many people know. A rule of thumb is that if you find a fact in three or more sources, it may be considered common knowledge.

An example of common knowledge is that John Adams married Abigail Smith.

Remember, you must document little-know facts and any ideas that interpret facts, even if they are paraphrased! For instance, even if you don’t use McCullough’s words, you should absolutely document McCullough’s belief that this marriage may have been the most critical decision of Adam’s life.

http://mciu.org/~spjvweb/plagdoc.html
NOTE TAKING

The huge advantage of good notes is speed. You can record your notes quicker, cover more sources and subtopics, and get more information than the person sitting there copying.

WHAT IS NOTE TAKING? Taking information from a source and making it your own.

WHAT MAKES GOOD NOTES?

- Record only important facts or keywords.
- Discard small words like *a*, *an*, and *the*. Use commas and dashes instead.
- No sentences!
- Never repeat in notes what you already know.
- Use quotation marks when copying. Give credit with source and page number if in print and date you accessed it if electronic.
- Paraphrase and summarize. These need citations too, so record the sources as you take the notes.

USING ICONN – The Connecticut Digital Library

Start with ICONN for computer-based research. ICONN is a database provided by the state that has some of the best research databases that money can buy. It is accessible through the web at [http://www.iconn.org](http://www.iconn.org) from school, or from home with a library card barcode number.

This is not just for current events. ICONN contains history and science sources, literary criticism, health and wellness research, full-text Spanish language encyclopedia sources, thousands of biographies and hundreds of newspapers and journals. It even provides citation information. It is the perfect on-line source for students. In addition, ICONN offers information at elementary through post-high school reading levels.

USING OUR AUTOMATION SYSTEM – Finding a book on the computer

HSC has a new on-line catalogue that is accessible from school and home. In addition to searching our catalogue, students can search the district as a whole, or another school separately. This way, if they don't find their book here, they can get it from another school by asking the library media specialist. Plus there is a link from our search page to the New Haven Free Public Library.

You can access the district search page simply by typing [http://library](http://library) from any school computer. From home, you type [http://library.new-haven.k12.ct.us](http://library.new-haven.k12.ct.us).
FINDING INTERNET SOURCES

Ideally, students should only be performing a general web search after they have exhausted the limits of ICONN (and it runs very deep.) Should they feel they need to use a general website, they should evaluate the website for credibility. PLEASE CHECK THE VALIDITY OF THE WEBSITE ON THEIR WORKS CITED LISTS. In the past, many students have been using websites posted by other students to conduct their research. This is not acceptable on any level.

INFORMATION ORGANIZER

GUIDING QUESTION __: ________________________________

Source Title: ______________________________________

Source Title: ______________________________________

Source Title: ______________________________________

Source Title: ______________________________________

Source Title: ______________________________________

Source Title: ______________________________________
DOCUMENTING SOURCES

Before writing a research paper, you will be gaining information from many different resources, including books, newspaper articles, and Internet sites. At a minimum, you should have a book source, one or two web pages, and a database source. The information you gather from these resources will help you learn about your subject, narrow your topic, form opinions, and gain new ideas. In writing your paper, you will build on the information you gathered during the research process. You must cite the sources of that information.

There are several different formats for citing resources. High School in the Community uses the Modern Language Association (MLA) format as its standard. For more detailed information about documentation, consult the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (5th edition). Copies are available in the HSC Library Media Center. The MLA’s website is <http://www.mla.org/>.

Example with author’s name included in your sentence:

At the conclusion of Lord of the Flies, William Golding writes that Ralph is overcome by "...shuddering spasms of grief that seemed to wrench his whole body" (186). [parentheses before punctuation; citation contains page # of quote]

Example without author’s name included in your sentence:

At the conclusion of Lord of the Flies, Ralph cries uncontrollably as his emotions absolutely overtake him (Golding 186). [cites author's last name & page # of paraphrased material]

PREPARING A WORKS CITED PAGE

The Works Cited list is an alphabetical listing of all the sources you cited within your paper. Your in-text citations should correspond directly to this list. The following pages outline the format for this list and give examples of the most common citations you will use at HSC. Because of the complexities of MLA format and style (especially when it comes to citing online sources), we have made our best effort with these examples based on current standards. We ask students to do the same.

Works Cited


Students are encouraged to use online citation makers such as http://www.oslis.org/resources/cm/mlacitationss
STANDARD FORMAT FOR A FORMAL PAPER

(Use for a 2+ page paper if the teacher gives no other specific instructions.)

- Times New Roman font at 12-point size
- **Title page** with bold title at center; name, date, and class info in corner, following pages with last name and page number in upper right (if word processing, use a header)
- Paragraphs indented (no extra space between); 1.5 or double spaced Works Cited/Works Consulted as final pages (see previous)

Tecumseh: An American Hero

David Vendley
U. S. History
Mrs. Leahey
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