Schools And Tests Essay, Research Paper

SCHOOLS AND TESTING

In the article provided, the author, Dick Williams, presents two ideas on the state of schools and education in the United States. The points of view he attempts to argue are the conditions of the nation s schools and the quality of the educational system. During his efforts to present his points, it appears as though his article is more opinionated than objective. This presents a problem because an opinion is not an argument. By presenting his thoughts he fails to do so tactfully through arguments, and those that are arguments are fallacies.

One of the first arguments presented deals with the conditions of the schools. Specifically the renewal and renovations of schools comes into question.

Should the harried taxpayers of Cobb and Dekalb counties, for instance, bail out incompetent or corrupt school boards in other states? Should New York City be rewarded for failing to build new schools in a timely manner?

This is the fallacy known as the circular argument. A circular argument is where the premise and the conclusion repeat each other using different wording. The premise in this fallacy would be the first question, while the second question is the conclusion. The idea in this statement is that cities with rundown schools are being paid for by taxpayers in other cities. In these cities the problems with schools are quite minimum.

Another argument made early on focuses on the office of the president. In the middle of the second paragraph, Williams writes:

President Clinton has become the master of exploiting the divide. Insiders call it the micropresidency: Identify a problem and propose a small solution.

In this statement, the phrase Insiders call it the micro-presidency is the conclusion. The rest of the statement forms the premise. Williams tries to convey the trickery of the president and his lack of handling problems effectively. Basically he attacks the presidency and commits the Ad hominem fallacy. The Ad Hominem is an attack against someone based on some aspect of his or her character, which has no relevance on the argument being made. This statement has no relevance on the point of the schools in America.

The second point Williams focuses on is the education of the school system in the country. More specifically he turns his attention to the testing of America s youth through the end of high school. High school graduates can take the SAT or the ACT. Well, this sentence is a clear case of the false extremes fallacy. Dick Williams assumes that high school graduates have only the choice of the SAT or ACT exams. Not all high school graduates take the SAT or the ACT. Some take entrance exams give by a college or whatever entrance exam or assignment a college will require for admission. So there are other alternatives to the SAT and ACT exams.

The last point the author makes in concluding his article is directed towards the future of testing of the countries struggling students.

The cry for national testing is a simplistic way of moving toward a national curriculum contemptuous of state and local tradition. It strengthens bureaucrats and diminishes local elected officials.

For this statement, the first sentence is the premise while the second is the conclusion. However, this is an appeal to pity. It is a fallacy because the premise provides no real or justifiable reason for the conclusion. The cry for national testing does not strengthen bureaucrats now does it diminish local tradition .

The author of this article, Dick Williams, commits at least four fallacies; the Ad Hominem, the appeal to pity, the circular argument, and false extremes. He clings to a conservative, republican view of the school situation in general and of the president. He believes in getting the job done, but he scolds the president for trying to do so. Thus, his political alliance makes a large part of this article an opinion instead of an objective editorial. In the few arguments Williams presents, he has good foresight but bad tact therefore creating the bad arguments that appear in his writing.