Your thesis claims evidence discussion and explanation

Model Student Paragraphs: Essay Two

Anything in parentheses in the paragraphs below has been added by me to show you how you could further strengthen these already strong paragraphs. The passages in green font are my comments about what you can learn from these paragraphs.

MODEL # 1

Yardley reveals a strong bias in favor of the Supreme Court decision. Yardley’s article states, "Children are not adults." This passage shows that Yardley supports the Supreme Court decision because he uses the word "children" instead of the word "students." The word "children" usually goes along with immaturity so the author is implying that the students are not mature enough to handle certain topics.

This paragraph has the right balance among the three elements of an analytical body paragraph--claim, evidence, and discussion. This discussion is effective for two reasons: (1) it refers back to specific parts of the quoted passage, and (2) it explains how the evidence--the quoted passage--helps to prove the claim. That explanation is the most important task of the discussion part of a body paragraph.

NOTE: The authors of this paragraph provided a clear signal phrase to introduce the evidence from the text. The only requirement they forgot is the page citation after the borrowed material and the comma after the signal phrase.

MODEL # 2

Carroll reveals a strong bias in favor of students' First Amendment rights. Throughout his article he uses quotations by teachers in California who support the students' right to freedom of expression. One quotation is from Steven O'Donoughue: "My students are very much offended by the ideas they are not considered mature enough to handle these topics" (328) These topics include teen pregnancy, AIDS, drugs, and sex in general. He goes on to say, "I think students are more aware of the topics that earlier generations wouldn’t even talk about. They can talk a lot more clinically about sexual topics. Just listening to student’s discussions about AIDS amazes me how detached and informed they are" (328-9). Carroll quotes O'Donoughue because he agrees with him. We know this because he doesn’t argue with any of O'Donoughue’s statements. He lets them stand for themselves because they express his views. Carroll and O'Donoughue are both adults making it clear that they agree with students' rights to freedom of speech and press.

This paragraph has a larger block of evidence and a smaller block of discussion than the first one, but the three required parts are here and the balance among them is still
effective. Most importantly, the authors of this paragraph explain how they know that Carroll agrees with the person he is quoting.

NOTE: These authors remembered to include a signal phrase each time they introduced a part of O'Donoughue’s quotation. They also got the page citation right. The only part missing here is the comma after each signal phrase.

MODEL # 3

It is apparent that Carroll is biased towards the students. Carroll quotes Justice Byron White, and there is not another statement by or for the majority. Carroll uses this quote as a type of thesis and breaks down every segment and tries to prove how mature the students really are. For instance when Justice White speaks about the range of sensitive subjects that would be censored ("sensitive topics, which might range from the existence of Santa Claus in an elementary school setting to the particulars of teenage sexual activities in a high school setting" (328)), Carroll counteracts by talking about how these articles (on topics of relevance to high school students) have the need to be published. Carroll quotes different faculty members on the maturity and growth of this new generation. Richard Lloyd states, "Right now, my students are writing in-depth feature stories about alcoholism in the home, AIDS, and a sociological study of our school" (327). (Lloyd’s) word choice is indicative of his bias towards the students. For instance, (he) uses the phrase "in-depth feature stories" suggesting the students have a level of maturity and professionalism.

(We can tell that Carroll agrees with Lloyd because) he supports Lloyd’s first claim by using another claim by Steve O'Donoughue, the newspaper adviser at Fremont High School. O'Donoughue says, "I think students are more aware of topics that earlier generations wouldn’t even talk about. They can talk a lot more clinically about sexual topics. Just listening to student discussions about AIDS amazes me how detached and informed they are" (329). (Once again, Carroll includes a quotation from an adult who works closely with students and who believes in their) level of maturity and how serious(ly) students take this topic.

In conclusion Carroll constantly uses quotes in favor of the students. (These quotations all come from adults who are in position to judge students firsthand, which makes their opinions more credible to a rational reader. In this way, by stacking the deck in favor of students, Carroll makes his bias clear without ever coming right out and saying that he believes the Supreme Court decision was misguided.)

This paragraph is the most sophisticated of the three in that it establishes an effective rhythm in the way it moves back and forth between evidence and discussion. Actually, we see three paragraphs here, but note that they are all serving the same opening claim about Carroll’s bias. The authors wisely chose to provide readers with a break in their discussion at logical places, where the direction shifts just a bit. At the beginning of the last paragraph, these authors prove that they understood the point of my lesson about inferring Diane’s age. (Remember the passage about the girl who hides ten dollars in a hole she digs in the ground?) They take the first steps toward pointing out that it is the
pattern of quotations throughout the entire text that proves Carroll agrees with those whom he quotes, just as it was the pattern of Diane’s actions throughout the entire passage that helped you infer her age. No single action could be taken as proof, but together they built a strong case.

While two passages of evidence are delivered in the form of quotations in the paragraphs above, note that the first bit of evidence introduced after the opening claim is an observation about the text as a whole (only one quotation in support of the Supreme Court’s decision) and about how the author then responds to that one quotation. This kind of evidence is as strong as specific quotations, and you all should think about where you can use different forms of evidence in your papers.

NOTE: These authors got the signal phrases, punctuation, and page citations all correct. Their work is a great model for you to study as you work to incorporate the required mechanics and conventions in your own papers.