

SAMPLE PERSUASIVE DRAFT

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Tablets for San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD)

Commented [Teacher1]: Nice job with the APA 7th edition title page.

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CM220: Composition Two

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*Please note that this is a **sample** draft with feedback to help inspire and guide your own original writing of a persuasive essay assignment. Be sure to review the assignment instructions and grading rubric, complete each task in the instructions, and contact the instructor with assignment questions.*

Tablets for San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD)

The Texas Education Agency rates state schools using a four-tier system, with “exemplary” schools being those with the highest student scores and “academically unacceptable” being the lowest rating. Schools can also rank as “recognized” and “academically acceptable.” While the many families moving to Texas for its low cost of living and unemployment rates seek out school districts with “exemplary” ratings, long-term residents whose children go to low-rated schools must move or put their children into private schools--if they can afford to do so. Despite being one of the largest school districts in one of the nation’s largest cities, the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) received only an “academically acceptable” rating in 2011, which was actually an improvement for the district since it received “academically unacceptable” ratings in 2009 and 2010 (“SAISD Progresses, Earns Acceptable State Rating,” 2011; “Texas Education Agency,” 2012). The “Great Schools” website gives the district a 3 out of 10 rating (“San Antonio Independent School District,” 2014). In order to improve academic performance and help SAISD students compete with peers in higher-rated districts when applying to college, the district needs to provide every high school student with an electronic tablet; this will encourage more learning outside of the classroom and increase mastery of skills.

As evidence that students in the district need this boost, one needs only look at how the SAISD students compare to others in the state of Texas. One evaluator of Texas schools, Local School Directory, indicates that the district’s graduation rate is 51.5%, more than 20% below the state average, while the dropout rate of 10.9 % is more than double the state’s average of 4% (2014). America is a place of opportunity, but the government must provide the resources for

Commented [Professo2]: Maggie, you are off to a great start with this draft and have included solid research-based information. I've provided you with revision suggestions to help you refine the organization and development of the argument.

To begin, your ethos as a writer is strongest when your argument is simple and straightforward. Fewer details in the introduction, for example, could make your argument stronger by using one strong example to set up the topic and a focused example of the issue that leads up to the proposed idea.

The following sentence taken from your paragraph on page 3, for example, is succinct and provides similar points made in the introduction; you may consider moving it: While San Antonio’s population makes it the nation’s seventh-largest city, it ranks 60th among the country in terms of literacy rates (Weber, 2014).

Commented [Student3]: The wording of this sentence is difficult to understand. I don’t think you need the opening phrase about college applicants. Try getting right to the point about why tablets should be given to each student. For example, state they would help with X, Y, and Z. Later in the paper, you mention learning, test scores, and how much students use them. Maybe these are three areas that could be included in your thesis. Later in the paper you also talk a lot about guidelines for schools to consider before adopting iPads, and maybe you can add that to your thesis too.

Commented [Teacher4R3]: In your thesis, you could assert the main ideas that support your claim that tablets should be implemented. You could list student learning, literacy rates, and engagement, for example.

achieving the American dream, and he believes education is the foundation for this upward mobility (Castro, 2012).

The city has already looked to tablets as a way to increase literacy rates. While San Antonio's population makes it the nation's seventh-largest city, it ranks 60th among the country in terms of literacy rates (Weber, 2014). The city opened BiblioTech, an all-digital library, in 2012; the area comprises the Harlandale and Southside school districts, which have ratings of 4 and 3 out of 10 respectively, according to the Great Schools.org web site ("Southside Independent School District," 2014; "Harlandale Independent School District," 2014). Ashley Elkholf, the head librarian at BiblioTech, observed that the library is frequently filled with local high school students who want access to the library's on-site desktops and the tablets that can be checked out (personal communication, February 14, 2014). For those who worry that students will not be responsible for the technology and will either damage or fail to return tablets, she notes that no patron has failed to return an iPad checked out of the library. Based on the interest area students have shown in the library, she believed that they would benefit immensely if local schools provided the tablets to all students (A. Elkholf, personal communication, February 14, 2014). Like SAISD, students in these districts need greater access to technology, and the library's tablets and computers do provide some of that access.

Certainly, providing tablets and internet access is a significant investment, and technology is not cheap. Many schools in Texas are struggling financially since the state cut its education budget by \$5 billion in 2011 instead of raising taxes (Castro, 2011). School districts then had to cut art programs, fire teachers, and figure out how to improve test scores with limited funding. Technology often moves to the bottom of the priority list when schools have to decide between new computers and larger student-teacher ratios. However, Minnesota's Byron

Commented [Teacher5]: These are very thoughtful ideas in the first body paragraph. The Local School Directory is not listed on your references, however, so you'll want to double check that source. Also, you may want to make the connection between this data and your main argument that a supplying SAISD with tablets for each student would address this issue.

Commented [Teacher6]: As mentioned earlier, this sentence would work well in the introduction as it effectively summarizes your introduction's main point.

Commented [Teacher7]: The interview with the librarian is terrific and might elicit a pathos appeal from readers when you mention how students can be trusted with technology. As you revise, ensure that each detail and piece of evidence is unified on the idea that providing SAISD students tablets is logical and will benefit student learning.

This information also brings up the issue of Wi-Fi access. Students can take the tablets home but not the Wi-Fi, so those opposed to your proposal may use the need for Wi-Fi as a reason not to adopt the technology. Consider adding a paragraph after this one that anticipates this objection and counter argues it.

Independent School District actually found that technology provided a solution to their budget woes. To reduce costs, the Byron ISD decided to abandon textbooks and create their own math curriculum (Fulton, 2013). They used Moodle, a free, open-source platform, instead of purchasing an expensive learning management system, and by creating their own curriculum, they did not have to pay steep fees to a publishing company for physical or e-books (Fulton, 2013). Byron ISD showed that technology combined with innovative curriculum could save money and improve the students' learning.

Districts do not only have to consider initial and long-term maintenance costs; they have to wonder whether the technology will work. The failure of some high-profile tablet pilot programs in Los Angeles and North Carolina could generate fears of a similar high-cost folly. The Guilford County, NC school district spent \$30 million to give all of its middle school students Android tablets only to experience numerous hardware malfunctions and screen breaks (Catalano, 2013). SAISD must review the technologies carefully to determine what will be the most cost-efficient and reliable tablets for student use.

The school district can also create partnerships with local businesses to reduce cost. Education innovators like Microsoft founder Bill Gates advocate technology as a way to provide teachers with the tools they need to motivate, challenge, and support students, and he argues that “just giving people devices . . . has a really terrible track record; you really have to change the curriculum,” but he also notes the need to “to learn, make mistakes, try new things out, find new partners to do things’ ” (as cited in Young, 2012, para. 3). The San Antonio/Austin area has numerous technology companies like RackSpace that might be willing to invest in a program that provides students with tablets.

Even school districts that can afford technological innovations wonder if the investment

Commented [Teacher8]: This story about Byron School District establishes an excellent and unique idea. Review the sentence leading up to it to ensure that it does not introduce too many problems that the tablet initiative would not solve.

Commented [Student9]: Interesting point. A lot of the guidelines or warnings you cover are good points for a school district to consider. This background information adds to your credibility and presents counter-arguments in a unique way.

Commented [Teacher10]: This part of the paragraph would work well in a section on teacher training. The part on Bill Gates corresponds with themes from the following paragraph on Justin Reich. It's okay to have more than one paragraph to explore a major point. Consider ending this paragraph with another solution by adding the part on Khan Academy providing resources for teachers.

Commented [Student11]: I agree with the professor about using this portion to emphasize the importance of teacher training. I also don't think you need the whole quote to make your point.

Commented [Student12]: This part is a bit vague in terms of the “how.” I really don't think you need it because the other part about saving money through bypassing textbooks is more powerful.

will lead to improved student learning outcomes, however. As Justin Reich (2012) notes in *Education Week*, technology “has the potential to transform education for many students,” but he follows that with the reminder that “it is not a standalone silver bullet for improving outcomes” (para. 1). He suggests that a rush to integrate technology followed a study commissioned by President Clinton in the late 1990s that recommended the use of educational technology despite the lack of evidence for outcome improvement. Without carefully considering the purpose of the technology and training teachers to use that technology effectively, he argues, technology will fail to have a real impact on learning (Reich, 2012). SAISD must create a curriculum that uses tablets effectively, or this investment will not help students.

Commented [Teacher13]: Consider using the portions on Justin Reich for setting up a paragraph on teacher training. I don't believe you need all of the information here, though, to effectively make your point. You might consider taking out the longer portion about Clinton. As well, your topic sentence for this section might be found in the last one sentence of this paragraph. Perhaps you can combine it with the opening sentence in some way.

Commented [Student14]: This part on Clinton is hard to understand. Does “followed” refer to a sequence of events or does it mean that it adhered to the study? I would still use some of this paragraph for the teacher training part of the paper.

Furthermore, critics argue that technology will dehumanize education; in fact, technology can actually personalize education. The Byron ISD experiment suggests that that technology combined with a thoughtful pedagogy can have a positive impact on learning. Teachers realized that designing their own curriculum meant they could adapt the curriculum as needed; technology actually afforded them the opportunity to personalize their students' education. Once a textbook is adopted, the schools are stuck with that curriculum until the next adoption cycle, but Byron's teachers could make adjustments to a particular unit if the students were struggling to master an objective. Many teachers also created instructional videos, which allowed students to watch videos from multiple teachers. If one teacher's explanation of a concept did not help the student understand, another teacher's approach might work (Fulton, 2013). Their use of technology actually improved their teaching, and SAISD could adopt a similar approach if students had tablets.

Commented [Teacher15]: This part of the paragraph would work well in a dedicated paragraph on flipping the classroom.

A key benefit of deploying tablets and integrating video tutorials into the curriculum is that teachers can “flip” the classroom, requiring students to review lessons at home then come to

school prepared to work on assignments, ask questions, and even tutor each other. Kidd and Chen (2011) call this “ubiquitous learning,” where students are able to access information anytime and anyplace, and they argue that “this type of learning can be powerful, personal, current, and situated” (p. xi). Khan Academy, a non-profit that provides thousands of free educational videos and interactive tutorials to teachers and students, provides a model for using technology to help students learn concepts outside of the classroom, and founder Salman Khan (2011) advocates the use of these videos to create a “global, one-world classroom.” Khan’s TED Talk describes a successful flipped fifth-grade math classroom pilot; students clearly improved as they reviewed videos and completed tutorials (Khan, 2011). After about 2 ½ years, students in the Byron ISD’s flipped classrooms scored higher on chapter tests than those in traditional, lecture-oriented classes (Fulton, 2013). While researchers are still sifting through evidence like these pilots to see if the flipped model has a direct impact on student outcomes, Goodwin and Miller (2013) note that educators see distinct benefits like better student-teacher interaction, the ability to provide students immediate feedback on their work, and the chance to let students learn at their own pace. These benefits alone are reason enough for SAISD to run a tablet pilot in at least one school.

Failure to provide students with the educational opportunities afforded by technology, particularly in underperforming school districts, will further widen the “digital divide” and increase economic disparity in this country. As Jose Ferreira (2014), founder of the Knewton adaptive learning platform argues, “[W]e can’t improve education by curing poverty. We have to cure poverty by improving education” (para. 6). The best way to improve education SAISD is to increase student access to technology, and providing them with tablets will be an important step in that direction.

Commented [Teacher16]: Interesting concept. I would expect this section on flipping the classroom to be at least two paragraphs. The first paragraph can discuss the Byron School District, and the second paragraph can discuss the Ted Talk. Consider saving the other part about Khan for the teacher training section of the paper.

Commented [Teacher17]: For a stronger statement here, consider deleting this highlighted portion that downplays the idea and simply begin this sentence with “Goodwin and Miller (2013) . . .”

Commented [Teacher18]: This concluding paragraph works well, but you’ll want to revise the final sentence to reflect the revised thesis statement.

References

Castro, A. (2011, January 19). Texas cutting \$5 billion from public schools. *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/19/texas-school-budget-cuts_n_811039.html

Castro, J. (2012, September 4). *Julian Castro DNC speech* [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jx3m7jk1CY>

Catalano, F. (2013, October 9). Tech happens: When tablets and schools don't mix. *GeekWire*. Retrieved from <http://www.geekwire.com/2013/tech-tablets-schools-mix/>.

Ferreira, J. (2014, January 22). The digital divide and America's achievement gap [Blog post]. *The Knewton Blog*. Retrieved from http://www.knewton.com/blog/ceo-jose-ferreira/the-digital-divide/?utm_campaign=newsletter&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=11721249&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-9_11o5kpiB0_qWR-we1OUI4GHVbWKTUA3bOP1RShQ5d6QDpJTs6klLPylnqtUiZ0gHxgR3F0K0XyHyYWyaxb2lMHa7ew&_hsmi=11721249

Fulton, K. (2013, September 1). Byron's flipped classrooms. *Education Digest*, 79(1), 22-26. Retrieved from MasterFILE Premier.

Goodwin, B. & Miller, K. (2013). Research says evidence on flipped classrooms is still coming in. *Technology-Rich Learning*, 70(6), 78-80. Retrieved from MasterFILE Premier.

Harlandale Independent School District. (2014). *Great Schools.org*. Retrieved from <http://www.greatschools.org/texas/san-antonio/Harlandale-Independent-School-District/>

Commented [Teacher19]: Great start to your reference page. When you begin editing the entries below, be sure to reduce the spaces after periods from two to one.

Commented [Student20]: See below.

Commented [Student21]: This source no longer exists, but I found what I think you're trying to use at this LinkedIn account if you're interested: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20140123152952-5048055-the-digital-divide-and-america-s-achievement-gap>

Commented [Teacher22R21]: Nice find!

Commented [Student23]: See below.

Commented [Student24]: This doesn't look right for a journal article.

Commented [Teacher25R24]: Correct.

Commented [Teacher26]: You won't need this source anymore, either, per the recommended edits to your introduction.

Khan, S. (2011, March). *Let's use video to reinvent education* [Video file]. *TED Talks*.

Retrieved from

http://www.ted.com/talks/salman_khan_let_s_use_video_to_reinvent_education.html

Commented [Student27]: I don't think the new APA wants us to use the "Retrieved from" for this, right?

Kidd, T. T. & Chen, I. (Eds.). (2011). *Ubiquitous learning: Strategies for pedagogy, course design, and technology*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing. Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

Commented [Teacher28R27]: Correct, you no longer need the "Retrieved from" in front of a link unless the source is not archived and expected to change.

Commented [Student29]: I don't think we need to put the publisher location anymore for the new APA.

Reich, J. (2012, July 5). Technology is not a silver bullet [Blog post]. *Education Week*.

Retrieved from

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/edtechresearcher/2012/07/technology_is_not_a_silver_bullet.html

Commented [Teacher30R29]: Correct again. Maggie, you'll want to fix the others that have publisher location and "retrieved from."

Commented [Teacher31]: Maggie, you'll want to revise this entry as an edited book.

Commented [Student32]: See above.

SAISD progresses, earns acceptable state rating [Press release]. (2011, July 29). Retrieved from

http://www.saisd.net/main/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1840:saisd-progresses-earns-acceptable-state-rating&catid=3:news&Itemid=151

Commented [Teacher33]: This type of source should look like the following:
San Antonio Independent School District. (2011, July 29). *SAISD progresses, earns acceptable state rating* [Press release]. <https://www.saisd.net/>

San Antonio Independent School District. (2014). *Great Schools.org*. Retrieved from <http://www.greatschools.org/texas/san-antonio/San-Antonio-Independent-School-District/>

Southside Independent School District. (2014). *Great Schools.org*. Retrieved from

<http://www.greatschools.org/texas/san-antonio/Southside-Independent-School-District/>

Commented [Teacher34]: You won't need these two sources per the suggested edits to the introduction.

Texas Education Agency. (2012). *Testing & accountability*. Retrieved from

http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index.aspx?id=2147495410&menu_id=660&menu_id2=795&cid=2147483660

Commented [Teacher35]: Double check this site's title and also remove the retrieved from.

Weber, P.J. (2014, January 4). Texas library offers glimpse of bookless future. *USA Today*.

Retrieved from <http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2014/01/04/san-antonio-bookless-public-library/4310655/>.

Young, J. R. (2012, June 25). A conversation with Bill Gates about the future of higher

education. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from

<http://chronicle.com/article/A-Conversation-With-Bill-Gates/132591/>