Argumentative Essay: Organization

Extended Writing Project Prompt and Directions:

Every day the media run headlines celebrating heroes among us. The firefighter who charges into the burning building to save an infant is a hero. The nurse who risks her own life to help patients with infectious diseases—she's a hero too. What qualities do all heroes have in common? What makes one person more heroic than another?

Your argumentative essay with research should include:

- **an explicitly stated claim about the individual who you think is the most heroic**
- **a logically organized argument supported by persuasive reasons and relevant textual evidence**
- **information from one unit text and at least one other print or digital source**
- **citations of your sources and a Works Cited page**
- **a conclusion that restates your claim, sums up your reasons and evidence, and leaves your readers with an original thought about the topic**

As you have learned, the purpose of argumentative writing is to persuade readers to accept the writer's thesis statement, or claim. To do so, the writer must organize and present his or her reasons and relevant evidence—the facts, examples, statistics, and quotations found during research—in a logical and convincing way. The writer must also select an organizational structure that best suits the argument.

Writers of arguments can choose from a number of organizational structures, including compare-contrast, order of importance, problem-solution, cause-effect, and chronological (or sequential) order, among others. Experienced writers use transition words and phrases to help readers understand which organizational structure is being used. As they plan, writers often use an outline or another graphic organizer to determine the most persuasive way to present their ideas and evidence.

Writers are not limited to using only one organizational structure throughout a text. Within a specific section or paragraph, they might use a different organizational structure. This does not affect the overall organization, however.

Identification and Application:

- When selecting an overall organizational structure for an argument, a writer must consider the claim he or she is making. Then the writer needs to think about the best way to present the evidence that supports it. Do this by asking:
    - To support my claim, should I compare and contrast ideas or details in the text?
    - Is there an order of importance to my evidence? Is some evidence stronger than other evidence or does all my evidence support my claim equally well?
    - In my claim, have I raised a question or identified a problem? Do I have supporting evidence that suggests a solution or an answer?
    - Does my supporting evidence suggest a cause or an effect?
    - To support my claim, does it make sense to retell an events or series of events in chronological, or time, order?

- Writers often use specific transition words and phrases to help readers recognize the organizational structure of their writing:
    - Compare and contrast: *like, unlike, and, both, similar to, different from, while, but, in contrast, although, also*
    - Order of importance: *most, most important, least, least important, first, finally, mainly, to begin with*
    - Problem and solution: *problem, solution, why, how*
    - Cause-effect: *because, as a consequence of, as a result, cause, effect, so, in order to*
    - Chronological order: *first, next, then, second, finally, before, after*

Once a writer has selected the most appropriate organizational structure, he or she can use an outline or a graphic organizer (for example, a Venn diagram, flow chart, concept map, or timeline) to begin organizing the supporting evidence. The one we will be using in class, can be found in the writing section of our composition books.