UIL CURRENT ISSUES & EVENTS NOTES
Academic Year: 2017-2018

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Then jot down between three and five supporting points. These are the things the writer knows the most about the subject. Fill in the little details later.

For example, on the topic of border security, a student might write:

**Thesis:** Over the last year, building on security issues over the last 200 years, border security, particularly along the U.S. and Mexico border, has come into question. Newly elected President Donald Trump insists a wall will separate the two countries. Mexican officials say they won’t pay for it. And local politicians say it just isn’t feasible.

**First point:** The executive order (both of them)

**Second point:** The wall: a problem or a solution

**Third point:** American ideology (DREAM Act, Republican platform Democratic platform, need for immigrants)

**Conclusion:** The number of immigrants may be as high as 20 million people. Most contribute to society as they pay taxes and work in businesses around the country. However, the Trump administration has a new view on the role of immigrants in American society, and that view will have to be reconciled with prevailing ideologies as the implementation of Trump’s executive order moves forward.

Between the major ideas, focus on the transitions. The essay should have a clear, organized, logical order, and information should flow from one idea to the next. A shorter, well-organized and focused essay is better than a longer, rambling essay.

**SAVE TIME FOR EDITING**

The rubric also says the essay has to be organized and well-written. It doesn’t have to be long. After all, students competing probably only have 20-30 minutes to write the essay. Use every minute of that time wisely.

This year, a contestant at state turned in her exam after about 38 minutes. I glanced. I have no idea if she placed or not, but her essay sure could have used some work. It was clear that she had at least a working knowledge of the material. But it was also clear she didn’t start by writing a short outline — or didn’t follow it anyway — and she didn’t take the time to look for grammar, spelling and punctuation errors. It seems clear from judges all over the state, year after year that a well-written and concise essay free of errors will do better than one where the student might have had a greater mastery of the topic but didn’t write well.

Use every minute of your time. The students in Class 6A this year were the last ones finished. Maybe it is because competition is stiffer in the bigger classes, but those students know to take their time and to save time for editing and rewriting. For the record, students have received perfect scores on the essay. Last year, one student in Class 5A did it. But the average score all classes remains around a 5-5.19 last year. The range of scores on the essay that same year was from 1-10.
and two of his associates were convicted. Shortly after Christie dropped out of the presidential race, he endorsed Trump and briefly chaired his transition team until he was replaced in that role by Vice President-elect Mike Pence.

Wray still needs to be confirmed by the Senate.

It’s just that kind of unpredictable drama that will make whatever happens inside the Beltway full of prominence, consequence and certainly conflict.

**HEALTH CARE**

“My first day in office, I am going to ask Congress to put a bill on my desk getting rid of this disastrous law and replacing it with reforms that expand choice, freedom, affordability,” said Trump on Oct. 25, a day after the St. Augustine speech, in Sanford, Florida. “You’re going to have such great health care at a tiny fraction of the cost. And it’s going to be so easy.”

Over and over he said, “We are going to repeal and replace Obamacare.”

But after the Republican-backed American Health Care Act seemed doomed, Trump appeared to backtrack on his long-held stance that President Obama’s signature legislation, the Affordable Care Act, should be repealed and replaced "immediately."

Speaker Paul Ryan pulled the bill because they couldn’t get enough "yes" votes for the bill to succeed on the floor. "We’ve got to do better and we will," Ryan said at a hastily arranged press conference. "This is a setback no two ways about it," but GOP leadership is emerging from the day "motivated to step up our game and deliver our promises."

With little progress, later in the summer, Trump, while in Ohio discussing infrastructure reform, said the Obamacare health care system is in a "death spiral" and must be reformed soon.

Whether the Affordable Care Act will be repealed and replaced or just fixed remains to be seen. Regardless, this remains one of the top items on the Trump and Republican agendas.

**THE ECONOMY**

The economy, consistently the top concern of most Americans, seems to be back on its feet after having run aground early in the year with 1.2 percent annualized growth. Republicans wanted twice that.

The April job report noted stronger employment gains compared with March and a further decline in the unemployment rate, which continues to prove a boon for households who have seen inflation rising and financial conditions tightening but only moderate wage growth. The unemployment rate was at 5.3 percent in 2015 but was at 4.3 percent in May. The number of unemployed persons, at 6.9 million, changed little in May. Another measure of unemployment, the U-6 rate, which has a broader definition of unemployment than the U-3, fell three-tenths of a point to 8.6 percent.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment in health care rose by 24,000 in May. Hospitals added 7,000 jobs over the month, and employment in ambulatory health care services continued to trend up. Job growth in health care has averaged 22,000 per month thus far in 2017, compared with an average monthly gain of 32,000 in 2016.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average broke 21,000 this year and remains on a steady increase as does the NASDAQ and S&P 500. In mid-June, the Dow was up more than 500 points since the Trump-fueled sell-off on May 17.

**PEOPLE TO WATCH**

**TIM COOK**

Tim Cook is the chief executive officer of Apple Inc., previously serving as the company’s chief operating officer under its founder Steve Jobs.

**TED CRUZ**

The son of a Cuban immigrant, Ted Cruz is a Tea Party favorite. As a Republican candidate for president, he was quick to defend his eligibility for the presidency, despite his Canadian birth. He has renounced any claim to Canadian citizenship. He was mentioned as a potential nominee for the U.S. Supreme Court but initially said he was not interested.

**BETSY DEVOS**

Secretary of Education

Betsy DeVos is a Republican donor and the former chairwoman of the state party in Michigan. She’s been an advocate for education reform centered on expanding charter schools and private-school vouchers. She has no government experience.

@BetsyDeVosED

**KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND**

Kirsten Elizabeth Gillibrand is an American politician and the junior U.S. senator from New York. Shas been in office since 2009. Gillibrand has long been seen as potential presidential material, and her decision to vote against almost every one of Trump’s cabinet nominees has earned her praise from the left.

@SenGillibrand

**NIKKI HALEY**

Ambassador to the United Nations

Nikki Haley spent six years as South Carolina governor and six years as a state legislator before that. She has no formal foreign policy experience.
The operation was completed the following year, but the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons has continued to document the use of toxic chemicals in the conflict. Investigators found chlorine was used “systematically and repeatedly” in deadly attacks on rebel-held areas.

The Islamic State has capitalized on the chaos and taken control of large swathes of Syria and Iraq, where it proclaimed the creation of a “caliphate” in June 2014. Its many foreign fighters are involved in a “war within a war” in Syria, battling rebels and rival jihadists from the al-Qaeda-affiliated Nusra Front, as well as government and Kurdish forces.

Talks in early 2014, known as Geneva II, broke down after only two rounds, with then-UN special envoy Lakhdar Brahimi blaming the Syrian government’s refusal to discuss opposition demands.

2015: More than 4.5 million people have fled Syria since the start of the conflict, most of them women and children. Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey have struggled to cope with one of the largest refugee exoduses in recent history. About 10 percent of Syrian refugees have sought safety in Europe, sowing political divisions as countries argue over sharing the burden. A further 6.5 million people are internally displaced inside Syria, 1.2 million were driven from their homes in 2015 alone.

2016: The United States and Russia led efforts to get representatives of the government and the opposition to attend “proximity talks” in Geneva in January 2016 to discuss a Security Council-endorsed road map for peace, including a ceasefire and a transitional period ending with elections.

MORE INFORMATION:

TERRORISM
The headline on tonight’s news was all too familiar: “Tehran Terror Attack.”

The New York Times reported:

“Assailants with rifles, explosives and women’s disguises stunned Iran on Wednesday with audacious attacks on the Parliament building and tomb of its revolutionary founder, the worst terrorist strike to hit the Islamic republic in years.

“At least 12 people were killed and 46 wounded in the pair of near-simultaneous assaults, which lasted for hours and clearly took Iran’s elite security forces by surprise. The six known attackers also were killed, official media said, and five suspects were reported detained.”

These attacks followed only days after the attacks in London by knife-wielding men who killed eight and injured 50 on London Bridge.

In May, a car bombing in Kabul’s diplomatic quarter killed at least 150 persons and wounded 413 others. Additionally, at least 141 soldiers and civilians were killed in an attack in Southern Libya.
SAMPLE QUESTIONS

In early 2016, Jan. 20-Feb. 20, Mercury, Venus, Saturn, Mars and Jupiter gave morning sky-watchers a special treat. What?

a. They lined up with Uranus, Neptune and Pluto for the last time this century.

b. They were all visible at once for the first time since 2005.

c. They all became visible with the naked eye, a rare occurrence.

d. They all lined up for the last time this decade.

Of the 17 hottest years ever recorded, 16 have now occurred since 2000. According to NOAA and NASA, global temperatures have continued to rise, and 2016 finished the year as what?

a. the second hottest year on record

b. the wettest year on record

c. the hottest year on record

d. the year with the smallest Arctic ice cap

Which multidrug resistant parasite represents a serious threat to global malaria control and eradication, spreading fast through Thailand, Laos and Cambodia?

a. *Plasmodium falciparum*  
   b. Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*  
   c. *Klebsiella pneumoniae*  
   d. *Escherichia coli*

DEVELOPMENTS IMPACT ALL PARTS OF OUR LIVES

From honeybees to microscopic viruses to planets light-years away, from self-driving cars to computers that fit on the head of a pin, developments and discoveries in science and technology impact almost every aspect of our life. Changes, developments and discoveries often warrant attention.

SPACE

After over 12 years at Saturn studying the planet and its rings and moons, NASA’s Cassini spacecraft has entered the final year of its mission, the Grand Finale. Starting in April of 2017, Saturn’s moon Titan began altering the spacecraft’s orbit so that the craft passes through the gap between Saturn and its rings. The Grand Finale will end Sept. 15, 2017 when Cassini will dive into Saturn’s atmosphere, transmitting data about the planet’s chemical composition until the signal is lost as the spacecraft burns up in the atmosphere.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

The rusty patched bumblebee is now on the endangered species list for the first time in a “race against extinction,” the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced in January. However, the gray wolf was delisted in Wyoming. Wolves have already been delisted throughout the rest of the Northern Rockies population. Notable increases in manatee populations and improvements in its habitat allowed the FWS to change the species’ status from endangered to threatened.

- 1,447 animals are listed as endangered or threatened.
- 945 plants are listed as endangered or threatened.

CRACK IN AN ANTARCTIC ICE SHELF

A 120-mile-long crack in Antarctica’s fourth-largest ice shelf is getting close to a full break, according to scientists. It has accelerated this year in an area already threatened by warming temperatures and is now only about 8 miles from the edge of the ice shelf.

PEOPLE TO WATCH

ELON MUSK

Elon Musk is founder, CEO, and CTO of SpaceX; co-founder, CEO and product architect of SolarCity; Co-founder and CEO of Neuralink. Musk has said the goals of SolarCity, Tesla and SpaceX revolve around his vision to change the world and humanity, including building a colony on Mars and reducing human impact on climate change.

DAVA NEWMAN

Dava Newman is a former deputy administrator of NASA, and professor of aeronautics and astronautics and engineering systems at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She is best known for promoting the development of space activity suits, namely the Bio-Suit, which would provide pressure by tension in the suit’s textile weave, rather than with pressurized gas. @davaexplorer

SYLVIA TRENT-ADAMS

Sylvia Trent-Adams is the acting surgeon general of the United States. She communicates scientific information to advance the health of the nation. Trent-Adams became the second non-physician to serve as surgeon general. She is the second nurse to serve in this role.