

Response Paper by SLU writer

In her *New York Times* article, "[Wander the Halls, Say Hello: A New Approach to School Safety](#)", Shapiro shares how the Administration and police department have decided to combat the issue of violence within New York City's public schools. Largely in response to the student that was stabbed to death in a Bronx classroom last year, a new pilot program has been instituted that aims to prevent incidents like that in the future and lower safety incident occurrences overall. The plan calls for 63 school safety agents working in the 30 selected schools in the Bronx to increase their current job responsibilities. School safety agents will be tasked with implementing this alternative approach under the new title of school coordination agent. As per the article, coordination agents will be required to move from the front desks they are normally stationed to and walk the halls in search of wandering students, talk to principals about ongoing and potential issues between students and say good morning to students every day. These additions to their job description are intended to shift their image and function as well as help build trusting relationships with students and the social service resources that can help in the event of conflict; essentially mimicking the roles neighborhood coordination officers (beat cops assigned to the same area/neighborhood for an extended period instead floating around) are tasked with on the street.

Identify article/text early: In keeping with the expectations of a reading response, this writer immediately identifies the article/text and author. They also immediately identify the overall subject of the article. This signals to the reader that the writer will be summarizing the article before analyzing it.

Amount of summary vs. analysis: This proportion of summary to analysis is good to aspire to: the writer spends roughly 1/3 of their paper for the summary portion & 2/3 on more analysis. The analysis section, as we will see, also gives us more information about the article itself.

Though the issue of security within schools, especially those that are majority Black and Latino, has raised many concerns amongst students and parents alike, the City obviously feels that this method can be successful. Others like, Donna Lieberman, executive director the New York Civil Liberties Union, question whether a more worthwhile investment might consist of adding more teachers, guidance counselors and social workers into schools instead of more security. With proper training, the hope is that coordination agents will be better equipped to handle the many issues they come across. The impact of their presence and this new approach remains to be seen.

Rhetorical shift: In this paragraph, the writer makes a connection from the article to a larger systemic problem that they see (“how race, class and politics dictate how ... services are rendered to the public.”). This signals a shift from summary to analysis or reaction.

Much of what this article highlights are how race, class and politics dictate how decisions are made and services are rendered to the public. This pilot program illustrates many of the issues that plague the city’s ability to effectively deliver services and address issues. Under the guise of preventing violence in schools and in response to the student tragedy last year, the decision was made to change security techniques rather than create long term fixes that truly address the problems which lead to the incidents in the first place. Unfortunately, this has been the government’s answer since the very early stages of public service delivery as described in Katz’s *In the Shadow of the Poorhouse*. In his analysis of poorhouses and outdoor relief, he posits that “it proved easier to eliminate or reduce relief than to remove the reasons

Summarizing towards analysis: This writer performs the task of *summarizing towards analysis*. In this example, the writer continues to inform the reader of the content in the article. However, the writer is doing so with a goal of supporting their analysis. Language like “under the guise” indicate *the writer’s own interpretation*.

Moving towards synthesis: The student draws a connection between what they see happening in this article to another source, potentially another reading from the course. Sometimes, professors will specifically ask you to do this type of comparative work. Even if a professor does not specifically request it, a response paper is a great place to explore any overlap or disagreement between two readings from the class.

Noticing and exploring a connection or disagreement is a first step towards *synthesis*, where you combine the information from multiple sources and add your own analysis of the literature. Synthesizing is key to research papers and literature reviews.

that made people ask for help..." (pg. 38). Thus, providing solutions for famine, disease, little to no employment and the sub-standard living conditions that led to people being stuck in poverty was and still is too big of a lift; conversely, providing just enough support to keep people alive was and is something more attainable. Similarly, utilizing precious funding on security to prevent an end result of violence does nothing to address the factors that contribute to it. Instituting this pilot ignores the social, emotional and learning needs of the students within those buildings and appears to be more of a disservice to them than a benefit.

Writer's response to article: Here, we start to see the writer's *own argument* in response to the article. Clearly, the writer is *critical* of the program, but the writer doesn't simply state that they are "against" the program. Building on the Katz source, they use strong, specific language to detail their critique.

Acknowledging a counter/opposing argument: In this first sentence, the writer acknowledges an argument based on analyzing statistics. Notice the use of "surface level" as a descriptor & the conditional "might"—through this language, the writer clearly begins to discredit the argument even as they introduce the argument.

Surface level analysis of the statistics provided in the article, which compare the number of safety incidents in South Bronx schools versus those in the West Village and Chelsea, might indicate that more security is the answer. However, those raw numbers do not account for the socio-economic differences, needs and dynamics of the people and neighborhoods that inhabit those areas. Thus, it is hard to believe that in the predominately Black and Latino South Bronx communities where this pilot will be deployed race and class were not factors in the decision-making process. Though the act of broadening the job responsibilities of school safety agents is not inherently racist or classist, ignoring the more prominent needs of this demographic in favor

Responding to the argument: The writer directly engages the counterargument by stating *how* the statistics are insufficiently reflective of the entire story. Note that the student moves quickly in their writing: they present the idea in one sentence & then immediately rebut the idea in the next sentence. This is an example of managing complex rhetorical moves without needing a lot of words or sentences.

Hedging: With the language of "it is hard to believe that," the writer uses the rhetorical move of "hedging" common in academic writing. "Hedging" is when a writer uses specific language to soften their argument. Writers do this for a few reasons: 1). It protects the writer's argument from being easily dismissed as overstatements or overconfident; 2). It allows for a space of conversation and acknowledgement of different analyses; 3). It respects the original argument and writer.

Though this sentence may not seem like elevated academic language, "hedging" is something you will see in sophisticated academic argumentation.

of doing something that is more attainable is - which is something we have seen plenty of over time.

Additionally, in response to violence in particular, the city tends to lean towards resolutions that are more publicly visible. Having the ability to hold a press conference at the end of the school year and boast that safety incidents went down in these specific schools would be a big accomplishment for the Mayor and police commissioner and would be viewed as a success in the public's eye. The politics of serving the poor and in this case keeping students safe in school means that public opinion will sway what and how services are implemented.

Overall, I feel this pilot misses the mark on delivering the most appropriate services to high school students in the South Bronx. Better analysis of the overall needs of students and the contributing factors that truly drive acts of violence could have led to a more holistic solution as opposed to one that amounts to making security more personable and visible. Though the government has shown signs of moving away from the traditional ways of doing things, pilots such as this prove there is still work to be done.

Significance: Notice how, throughout the paper, the writer informs the reader of the significance of their argument. In the paragraph above, they tie the issue of school safety agents to a history of failing to properly serve the school's specific demographic population.

Conclusion: In the conclusion, the author clearly states their overall position on the article's subject. Note how, in the conclusion, the author doesn't simply repeat the same points made in the body. Instead, the author offers a suggestion for an alternative way to approach the issue at hand.

Final Sentence: The final sentence draws an overall conclusion that reflects upon the larger stakes of this program – how the program represents the government being stuck in their ways. This nicely reminds us of how the writer drew in the Katz source to support their argument.