Using Point of View/ Bias/ Perspective on Document-Based (DBQ) Questions.

Why does AP give points for using POV/Bias/ Perspective in the DBQ?
Historians need to know that historical sources are NOT statements of fact. Diaries, letters, brochures, pamphlets, books and even charts and graphs are all statements of opinion made by a person with a specific perspective and a specific goal in mind.

Without this knowledge, students often write essays using documents as equally valid statements of fact. Instead, AP student writers should be evaluating whether documents are likely to be accurate and complete, and how the author of the document may be revealing his or her perspective, bias and goals for writing.

How can students show POV/bias/ and perspective?
AP recommends at least four methods.
1. **Attribution** is the simplest method. By citing a documents author, students show the document is a particular person’s opinion or perspective rather than pure fact. To be awarded a point for this simple method students must give the attribution for each document used in their DBQ.

**Here are some examples taken from the 1993 Renaissance education DBQ:**

1. Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, Italian humanist
2. Erasmus, northern humanist and theologian

2. **Authorial point of view.** Students can also explain how the perspective of an author (his or her gender, occupation, class, religion, nationality, political position, or ethnic identity) influences the views presented in the document and shaded how they presented their version of the facts in the document. A person’s POV also often give a reader clues to their goals for the writing which can help a historian understand what motivated the writer.

For example:
1. Because Battista Guarino is Italian humanist educator, it is natural
for him to believe that each of the parts of a Renaissance education are “activities proper to mankind”.

2. Naturally, John Amos Comenius, an educational **reformer** believes that education should change so that “...those things which are real, and fit to enlighten men’s minds, and to prepare them for action” are taught rather than only the humanist subjects.

3. **Reliability and accuracy of source.** AP students need to be able to explain why a writer is probably a truthful and accurate witness or not. Also, students need to explain the likelihood of honest observation depending on the type of document (diary versus newspaper report compared to propaganda pamphlet).

For example:
1. We can trust Francesco Guicciardini because he is an Italian Statesman and historian. Statemen and historians typically tell the truth and these are his Reflections written to show what he thinks rather than to change the education system.

4. **Tone or intent of the author.** Writers often use satire, sarcasm, irony, political commentary, humor and other examples of tone to make a point. Students should point this out when they notice it in a document. Students should also explain how the tone changes the trustworthiness of a document.

**Example:**
When Montaigne uses the word “absurd” to describe the educational system he is emphasizing his frustration and irritation with the Renaissance schools. It is likely, therefore, that his frustration has caused him to exaggerate the extent of the problems of a Renaissance education.