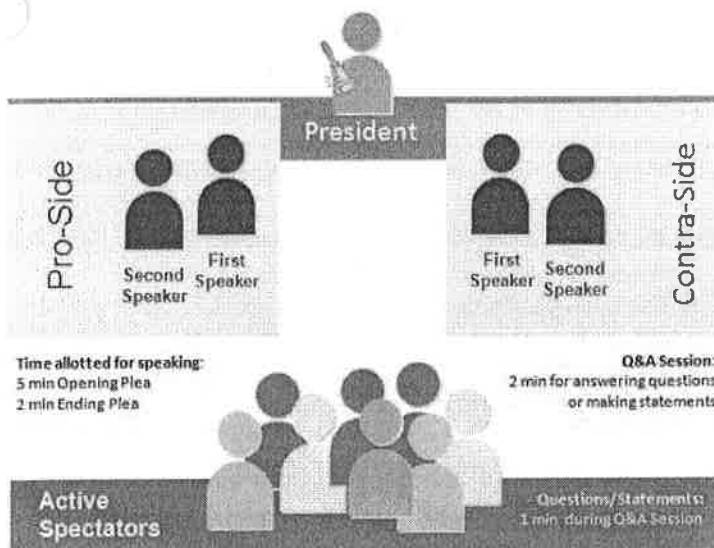


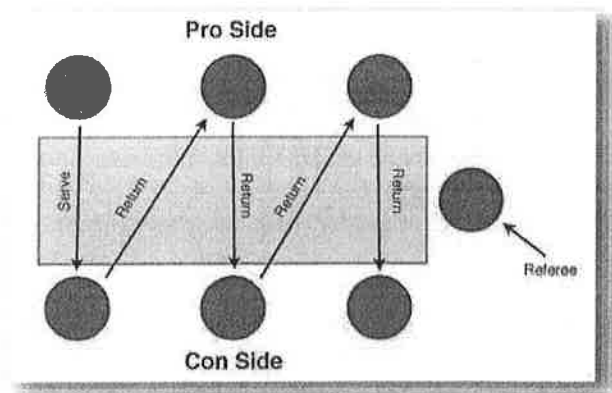
Debate Resource Handbook

Ms. Havlin

Public Speaking & Debate



Typical debate structure



The Benefits of Debate

Why Supporting High School Debate is a Worthwhile Project

The core of competitive high school debate is to examine every side of important and controversial issues in an atmosphere of reasoned argument and respectful discourse. The enormous effort that students put forth to succeed in this intellectually exciting activity is truly inspiring. They devote a huge number of hours to research, discussion, case writing, and practicing for competitions. They spend countless evenings and weekends at tournaments competing for their schools and teammates. The benefits they accrue as a result of all their hard work are numerous. Here are just a few:

Rigorous and Critical Thinking

Perhaps the most important skill debaters learn is the ability to think rigorously and critically. A number of studies have reported that participation in debate increasing the critical thinking of debate students.¹ Debate participation promotes problem solving and innovative thinking, and helps students to build links between words and ideas that make concepts more meaningful.² Debate students are taught to synthesize wide bodies of complex information, and to exercise creativity and implement different ways of knowing.³ Learning to think well has far reaching effects into every aspect of a student's life.

Academic Skills

Many studies show marked improvement in a wide variety of academic skills as a result of participation in competitive debate. Debate students excel in written and oral communication, and greatly improve their reading comprehension (sometimes 25% more than their peers).⁴ Students become comfortable with new concepts and unfamiliar language, and gain access to a wide array of new information such as college-level philosophy, history, public policy and current events.⁵ Perhaps most importantly, debaters become self-directed learners, allowing them to take control of their education experience and continue to learn throughout their lives.⁶ This makes competitive debate a particularly affective vehicle for gifted and talented education.⁷

Mental and Emotional Maturity

Debate requires students to engage serious subject matter in a mature and professional environment. Debate students show more maturity in the face of adversity and tend to develop stronger relationships with peers and mentors than the average student.⁸ Debate teaches students to recognize how others think, which improves their ability to cooperate and resolve conflicts.⁹ This makes debate one of the most successful vehicles for providing affective education to at-risk students.¹⁰ Ultimately, debate increases students' self-confidence by helping to teach them the skills necessary to become competent adults.¹¹

Academic and Occupational Achievement

All of these skills ultimately lead debate students to notable academic achievement. Debate students consistently receive impressive grades throughout high school and college. The average debate team has a GPA of 3.75 (and it is often higher), and the average debate student is in the top 10% of his or her high school class.¹² Improvement in academic performance is common to all debate students, regardless of their level of academic achievement prior to joining the activity. Debate students also score better on the ACT and SAT than their peers,¹³ and are consistently admitted to prestigious post-secondary institutions.¹⁴ A stunning 98.58% of debate students attend college, and debate participation increases the chances of being offered college scholarships.¹⁵ Many debate students go on to earn advanced degrees.

Beyond their academic careers, debaters tend to enjoy success in the world of work. Many top corporate executives and high-ranking officials in all branches of government are former high school debaters.¹⁶ Debate students tend to become leaders in their schools and communities because they develop strong listening skills, tact, self-confidence, and often take on strong leadership roles within their teams.¹⁷ Finally, debate students tend to be politically active and have high levels of civic engagement. This is particularly true for women and students of color, because debate skills help to break down traditional barriers to civic engagement.¹⁸

All considered, it is not surprising that many students report that participation in competitive debate was the most educational and rewarding aspect of their high school careers.

12 Ways Debating Will Help You for the Rest of Your Life

St. John's-Ravenscourt | January 11, 2016

Reasoning, research and even public speaking skills are just some of the positives behind learning how to be a great debater. From planning your argument (even if you don't agree with it) to choosing your words wisely, debating will help you take on whatever life chooses to throw at you.

Debating is by no means the same as entering into a full-on argument. In fact, you will need to develop a succinct, effective argument, which will gain you support and kudos, rather than blindly attacking your opponent.

From Cicero to Churchill, history's great debaters have helped shape the world we live in and resolve many of society's issues. Here are 12 ways that debating can help you in your life for years to come.

1. Be a better critical thinker

While you might not debate on a day-to-day basis, chances are you will get involved in small disagreements and differences of opinion. Debating, instead of arguing, can help you defuse a rapidly escalating situation. Rather than raising your voice, take a step back and choose your words wisely.

Debating helps you to develop essential critical thinking skills – the ability to make reasoned and well thought out arguments in addition to questioning the evidence behind a particular stance or conclusion. Critical thinking will help you become curious about new ideas while also retaining a level of scepticism and building a healthy attitude to questioning. It will also help you to become more humble – well, you can't be right all the time!

2. Articulate your thoughts

Ever had that feeling when you just can't get your words out quickly enough? Debating can help you become even better at explaining a whole variety of topics. From explaining complex mathematical equations to the plotline of your favourite book, debating helps you to identify your audience and choose the appropriate tone. Too formal a tone will only alienate you from your listeners, while being too relaxed might undermine your own arguments. The ability to articulate and plan your thoughts is key in debating, producing a well-planned out and sharp argument.

3. Education is key

In any debate the argument matters, even if you don't agree with it on principle. The manner in which you deliver your winning speech is also incredibly important: keeping calm and maintaining eye contact are all proven as effective debating techniques. Last but not least is the method in which you put your debate together. Are your arguments coherent? Do they make sense?

A good debater will keep all of these in mind in addition to the core elements they have acquired through education (reading and finding sources, writing and drafting a speech, speaking confidently and being able to listen) – useful both inside and outside the classroom.

4. Think on your feet

Think outside of the box, challenge your opponent and be ready to identify any loopholes in their counter-argument. The ability to think on your feet and respond to questions and comments is essential while debating – hesitating could cost you precious time and points. In fact, the ability to think on your feet could stand you in good stead in any situation which life throws at you, when time is of the essence and a decision needs to be made fast.

5. Conflict resolution

A good debater will remain focused and won't stray from the issue they are discussing. Just like any successful orator, remember who it is you want to keep on side, and present a personable argument – you will appear instantly much more amenable and likeable.

Knowing how to lose graciously and accept your failings are important skills, both in debating and during everyday life. This will also help resolve any conflicts before they have a chance to begin. So, accept any criticism that comes your way. It will make you a much more polished and proficient speaker – and human being – in the long term.

6. Show some empathy

A successful speaker will always maintain a degree of empathy while debating – you might not believe in what you have been assigned, but empathy will help you understand and accept the beliefs of others. Nobody is asking you to agree with the other party's argument, but empathy is an important life skill, helping you to improve your relations on a personal and professional level.

7. Keep your emotions in check

A good debater will also remember to retain an element of poise and composure – addressing the issue rather than getting carried away emotionally. In fact, managing your emotions will not only stand you in good stead while debating. It is no easy skill to manage, but will gain you respect in every walk of life.

8. Construct meaning out of complex situations

Debating will also help you learn how to construct meaning out of, what are usually, rather complex topics. From world peace to banning nuclear energy, taking the time to research the subject and carefully construct the points you want to make will help you construct a better argument.

Finding solutions to a previous problem and compiling creative solutions and ideas are also key skills for any good debater. Thinking outside of the box and making the best of a bad situation are excellent traits to have, meaning you are prepared and ready to take on any challenge, no matter what the size.

9. Presentation skills

Presentation plays a crucial part in how others perceive you as an individual, and more importantly, as competition.

Consider what you are going to say, speak slowly and with clear enunciation. It will make for better reasoning and a clearer understanding of what you say. Good presentation skills will earn you instant respect both while debating and in future situations.

10. Confidence boost

Good presentation skills will also help boost confidence – helping you to shine at interviews or work related events. If you are confident you feel more able to take on increased responsibility and even take some risks – helping you to stand out as an individual. A polished overall presentation and confident speaking manner will make you a memorable individual.

11. Be more socially conscious

Debating is a skill which requires any individual to be much more politically and socially aware of current affairs. In fact, debating also requires you to address a whole range of diverse social issues and viewpoints. Being more socially and politically aware is not only important while debating but it will also ensure that you connect and relate better to others, both socially and in the workplace.

12. An expanded worldview

Debating not only touches on political and social topics, it can also help individuals acquire a totally different worldview too. Debating means students study topics that they wouldn't normally consider, meaning they have a deeper understanding of the society and the world which we live in. An expanded worldview also encourages students to be proud of their talents and achievements, in addition to being more appreciative of the opportunities that await them.

Being more conscious of the world we live in will stand you in good stead for the future – even if you don't win the debate this time. Read more at <https://www.studyinternational.com/news/12-ways-debating-will-help-you-for-the-rest-of-your-life/#iBV4rRIXeIUoMIML.99>

A debate is a **discussion** or **structured contest** about an issue or a resolution. A formal debate involves two sides: one supporting a resolution and one opposing it. Such a debate is bound by rules previously agreed upon. Debates may be judged in order to declare a winning side. Debates, in one form or another, are commonly used in democratic societies to explore and resolve issues and problems. Decisions at a board meeting, public hearing, legislative assembly, or local organization are often reached through discussion and debate. Indeed, any discussion of a resolution is a form of debate, which may or may not follow formal rules (such as Robert's Rules of Order). In the context of a classroom, the topic for debate will be guided by the knowledge, skill, and value outcomes in the curriculum.

Structure for Debate

A formal debate usually involves **three groups**: one **supporting a resolution** (affirmative team), one **opposing the resolution** (opposing team), and those who are **judging** the quality of the evidence and arguments and the performance in the debate. The affirmative and opposing teams usually consist of three members each, while the judging may be done by the teacher, a small group of students, or the class as a whole. In addition to the three specific groups, there may be an audience made up of class members not involved in the formal debate. A specific resolution is developed and rules for the debate are established.

Debate Preparation:

- Develop the resolution to be debated.
- Organize the teams.
- Establish the rules of the debate, including timelines.
- Research the topic and prepare logical arguments.
- Gather supporting evidence and examples for position taken.
- Anticipate counter arguments and prepare rebuttals.
- Team members plan order and content of speaking in debate.
- Prepare room for debate.
- Establish expectations, if any, for assessment of debate.

Conducting Debate:

Debate opens with the affirmative team (the team that supports the resolution) presenting their arguments, followed by a member of the opposing team. This pattern is repeated for the second speaker in each team. Finally, each team gets an opportunity for rebutting the arguments of the opponent. Speakers should speak slowly and clearly. The judges and members of the audience should be taking notes as the debate proceeds. A typical sequence for debate, with suggested timelines, is as follows: *Note: Equal time for equal tasks.*

- the first speaker on the affirmative team presents arguments in support of the resolution.

- The first speaker on the opposing team presents arguments opposing the resolution.)
- The second speaker on the affirmative team presents further arguments in support of the resolution, identifies areas of conflict, and answers questions that may have been raised by the opposition speaker. ()
- The second speaker on the opposing team presents further arguments against the resolution, identifies further areas of conflict, and answers questions that may have been raised by the previous affirmative speaker. ()
- The rules may include a short recess for teams to prepare their rebuttals. (5 minutes)
- The opposing team begins with the rebuttal, attempting to defend the opposing arguments and to defeat the supporting arguments without adding any new information. (3 - 5 minutes)
- First rebuttal of the affirmative team
- Each team gets a second rebuttal for closing statements with the affirmative team having the last opportunity to speak.
- There cannot be any interruptions. Speakers must wait their turns. The teacher may need to enforce the rules. Will I need to? :)

Post-debate Discussion and Assessment

When the formal debate is finished, allow time for debriefing and discussion. Members of the audience should be given an opportunity to ask questions and to contribute their own thoughts and opinions on the arguments presented. Members of the debate teams may also wish to reflect on their performance and seek feedback from the audience, including the teacher.

If some form of assessment was part of the debate plan, it would be conducted at this time. Assessment could be conducted by the teacher, the judging team, or the entire class.

Additional Support Materials

The following curriculum support materials may be of use in preparing a class debate:

- TN 24: The Inquiry Process (Conducting Research)
- TN 25: Persuasive Writing
- TN 33: Articulate Perspectives on Issues
- TN 34: Dealing with Controversial Issues
- TN 37: Critical Thinking in Social Studies

Debate Assessment Rubric

BLM
G-15

Debating Team Name and Position: _____

Name of Assessor: _____ Date: _____

Note: This form can be used by both the teacher and student peers.

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The speakers' statements clearly supported their position in the debate. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. The speakers' statements appeared to be well researched and documented. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. The speakers addressed the opposing team and made appropriate eye contact. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. Arguments were presented with clarity and appropriate volume. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. Speakers were well rehearsed with minimal reliance on notes. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. Rebuttals were specific to opposing arguments and expressed with clarity. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 7. Rebuttals showed evidence of good listening skills. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8. Concluding arguments and statements were effective and convincing. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9. Speakers adhered to the rules of the debate. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 10. The overall collective effort of the debate team was effective. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Additional Comments:

Classroom Debate Rubric						
Criteria	5 points	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point	Total Points
Respect for Other Team	All statements, body language, and responses were respectful and were inappropriate language	Statements and responses were respectful and used appropriate language, but once or twice body language was not	Most statements and responses were respectful and in appropriate language, but there was one sarcastic remark	Statements, responses and/or body language were appropriate. Some sarcastic remarks	Statements, responses and/or body language were consistently not respectful	
Information	All information presented in this debate was clear, accurate and thorough	Most information presented in this debate was clear, accurate and thorough	Most information presented in the debate was clear and accurate, but was not usually thorough	Some information was accurate, but there were some minor inaccuracies	Information had some major inaccuracies OR was usually not clear	
Rebuttal	All counter-arguments were accurate, relevant and strong	Most counter-arguments were accurate, relevant, and strong	Most counter-arguments were accurate and relevant, but several were weak	Some counter arguments were weak and irrelevant	Counter-arguments were not accurate and/or relevant	
Use of Facts/Statistics	Every major point was well supported with several relevant facts, statistics and/or examples	Every major point was adequately supported with relevant facts, statistics and/or examples	Every major point was supported with facts, statistics and/or examples, but the relevance of some was questionable	Some points were supported well, others were not	All points were not supported	
Organization	All arguments were clearly tied to an idea (premise) and organized in a tight, logical fashion	Most arguments were clearly tied to an idea (premise) and organized in a tight, logical fashion	Most arguments were clearly tied to an idea (premise) and organized in a tight, logical fashion	Most arguments were clearly tied to an idea (premise) and organized in a tight, logical fashion	Most arguments were clearly tied to an idea (premise) and organized in a tight, logical fashion	
Understanding of Topic	The team clearly understood the topic in depth and presented their information forcefully and convincingly	The team clearly understood the topic in depth and presented their information with ease	The team seemed to understand the main points of the topic and presented those with ease	The team seemed to understand the main points of the topic, but didn't present with ease	The team did not show an adequate understanding of the topic	
Total Points:						
Comments:						

Inquiry-based learning is a form of **self-directed learning** in which the learners decide what they need (want) to learn, identify and use resources that will provide the necessary information, and assess their own progress in learning. Although self-contained "research projects" may be described as inquiry projects, the term "inquiry" has a larger meaning than **research**. Inquiry encompasses the habits of mind that promote learning, and the processes that can be woven through all classroom activities to enable students to broaden and deepen their understanding of the world. Inquiry processes begin and are sustained by **student curiosity**. They are supported by teachers who ask, "How can we find out?" Inquiry-based instruction fosters and sustains an attitude of inquiry that will guide students through a lifetime of **independent learning**.

Building classrooms around inquiry is a way of **integrating process and content**. Students learn to locate, manage, process, and share ideas—at the same time deepening their understanding of subjects that matter to them.

Stages of Inquiry

Students need to review and assess their inquiry process at the end of each stage. They may move back into the inquiry process at any time.

Stage 1: Task Definition

- Pose the question: "What do I want to know (more) about?"
- Establish the purpose and need for inquiry.

Stage 2: Planning

- Activate prior knowledge.
- Develop specific question to focus and direct inquiry.
- Establish assessment criteria for content and process.

Stage 3: Information Retrieval

- Identify and select information sources.
- Locate and collect information.
- Primary (e.g., interview, survey)
- Secondary (e.g., periodical, book)

Stage 4: Information Processing

- Choose relevant information.
- Evaluate information.
- Organize and record information.
- Make connections and inferences.

The Inquiry Process (Conducting Research)

TN
24

Stage 5: Creation/Genesis

- Make decisions about audience, purpose, and form.
- Create product(s).
- Revise and edit.

Stage 6: Presentation and Assessment

- Present final form of product.
- Assess product.
- Evaluate inquiry process and skills.

Teacher Considerations

Teachers...

- model the attitudes and habits of an inquiring mind
- act as a catalyst for student thought
- create a learning environment that supports inquiry into questions and topics that students care about
- plan a course of study flexible enough to accommodate unanticipated inquiries
- build students' repertoire of strategies, while encouraging more autonomy
- broaden the information base in the classroom and links to the community
- manage inquiry activities that may require students to work independently in settings other than the classroom

*no need to read...
unless you find teaching
fascinating!*

* This information sheet is adapted from *Senior 2 English Language Arts General Learning Outcome 3*, pages 169-170. Teachers may wish to read "Fostering Student Independence in Inquiry," a detailed chart (pages 171-178 of the ELA document) that surveys the six stages of inquiry and outlines the tasks appropriate for skills required at each stage for both advanced and less experienced students. *Stages of Inquiry and Fostering Student Independence in Inquiry Posters* (for classroom display) are available through Manitoba Text Book Bureau, Stock # 80386.

Related Teacher Support Materials

- "Geographic Skills and Perspectives," Appendix A, *Canadian National Standards for Geography, A Standards-Based Guide to K-12 Geography*. The Canadian Council for Geographic Education, 2001. Copyright: The Royal Canadian Geographical Society.
- SFAL 6.84: Researching
- SFAL Chapter 8: Student Learning Projects
- TN 2: The Nature of Geography
- TN 11: Asking Geographic Questions
- TN 12: Asking Questions
- TN 37: Critical Thinking in Social Studies

This is an important communication skill outcome in the Manitoba social studies curriculum (S2-S-405). But what does it really mean?

To **articulate** means to express an idea or opinion clearly and coherently. This expression could be either verbal or in written format; however, many learning strategies involve group or class discussions, thus implying a verbal expression. If this is the case, students can only articulate their perspectives if they do, indeed, say something, coherently, in a discussion. In addition, it is obvious that participants would require a reasonable command of the language of discussion in order to articulate their views. Those who are shy, introverted, or from a different cultural background may be reluctant to speak up and express their views in a discussion. Teachers and fellow students should encourage involvement of all in the group by being sensitive, understanding and providing a safe and non-threatening environment.

A **perspective** is a point of view or an opinion on an issue or topic. For someone to have a perspective, they must have enough prior knowledge of that issue or topic to be able to develop and clarify their point of view. Thus, students must undertake adequate background study of an issue and make appropriate preparations before they can be expected to share their opinions. Furthermore, a perspective can be a personal viewpoint or one that is common to a specific cultural or minority group and may not be one that is familiar to most members of a discussion group. The uncertainty of having your culturally influenced view understood by the group can add to the reluctance to verbally articulate your perspective. It is critical for both students and teachers to understand that a personal or cultural perspective cannot be "wrong" and should not be minimized, criticized, or considered unimportant. It is fair, however, for group members to ask for clarification or a rationale, in an objective manner, of any and all perspectives that are expressed.

An **issue**, in this context, refers to an important subject of discussion and debate, and will usually be one that is identified as a knowledge or value outcome in the curriculum. The issue in question may not be one that is naturally of great interest to many young people; however, as part of the learning outcomes it is important to engage students, to expand their awareness, and to expose them to the realities of the world around them. It is the challenge of the teacher to establish a healthy learning environment, to present issues in an interesting and meaningful manner, and to empower students to clarify and share their perspectives and act on them if appropriate.

How does one **assess** students' skills in articulating perspectives on issues? Assuming that perspectives are articulated verbally, teachers should observe and monitor group discussion for evidence of specific items identified above. This can be done informally through observation only, or more formally through the use of a checklist (see BLM G-10). If students are expressing their views in writing, teachers would have to adapt the checklist to create an appropriate assessment tool. In any case, aside from exemplary modelling, most students will require understanding, encouragement, and positive feedback to assist them in developing the skill of articulating their perspectives on issues.

Persuasive Writing

TN
25

*Compare to what you already know/
what we have already discussed.*

As the term suggests, the purpose of this form of writing is to persuade the reader to change attitudes and/or behaviours in some way. Persuasive writing is most effective if the writer is familiar with the readers' views or positions on an issue. This knowledge will help the writer determine if the writing is to reinforce, shape, or reverse the opinion of the reader. Letters to legislators and to the editors of newspapers and magazines, as well as editorials and commentaries, are common examples of persuasive writing.

For the purpose of this learning experience, determine if you will have students merely plan and write the letter, or if it will actually be sent to an intended audience. Before mailing the letters, be sure to consider school policies, parental concerns, and other potential implications.

Suggestions for Students

Planning Persuasive Writing:

- Decide what issue you will write about and clearly define the issue.
- Consider who your intended readers will be and what views they may hold on the issue.
- Brainstorm a variety of strategies you can use to gain reader support for your view on the issue. These might include acknowledging the readers' current viewpoints, listing benefits of the view you are promoting, providing reliable evidence, and using sound reasoning.
- Develop logical and ethical arguments. Avoid purely emotional rhetoric.
- Conduct necessary research to collect evidence, examples, and support for the view that you are promoting.
- Develop an outline to follow when you begin writing.

Writing Persuasively:

- Determine the pattern and style of writing that best suits your purpose and that will assist the reader in processing your information.
- Decide whether you will state your view right at the start of the letter, followed by supporting evidence and reasoning (direct approach), or whether you will discuss the issue and present your arguments before finally stating your view specifically near the end (indirect approach).
- In the direct approach, consider using your strongest argument immediately upon stating your viewpoint, followed by other points and evidence. In the indirect approach, develop your position to lead up to your strongest argument at the end.
- Select the voice most appropriate to establish your credibility as perceived by your readers; avoid "talking down to" or insulting your readers.
- Keep letters short, precise, and well organized.
- Develop a strong introductory statement to engage the reader's attention and an effective conclusion to maximize the impact on the reader.

Posting The Letter (optional)

BLM
G-10

Observer: _____ Date: _____

[illegible]

Issue Discussion Map

BLM
G-24

Name: _____ Date: _____

Topic: _____

Source	Evidence No		Evidence Yes	Source
		<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> The Central Question </div> <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;">↔</div> <div style="margin-top: 10px;">↔</div> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 15px; padding: 10px; text-align: center;"> My Conclusions </div> </div>		

Dealing with Controversial Issues

Consider yourself as the facilitator or teacher of a discussion as you read.

A controversial issue is one which results in **dispute** and **disagreement** due to a difference of opinion. The *Senior 2 Social Studies: Geographic Issues of the 21st Century* curriculum deals with a variety of issues that may be controversial due to differences of opinions and values held by students. As citizens of a democracy, students will often be confronted with issues that generate a diversity of viewpoints and require **value clarification**, **negotiation**, and **compromise**. Aside from knowledge-based outcomes about the issues themselves, the curriculum includes a number of skill outcomes that relate to debate, articulating viewpoints, and listening to and understanding others' opinions.

Dealing with controversial issues in class may become highly emotional, particularly if they involve values, beliefs and ethical principles. Issues surrounding questions of resource use and management, land use, distribution of food resources, economic activities, preservation of the environment, and climate change may lead to controversy in the classroom. Controversies surrounding these issues should not be avoided; however, teachers and students must keep in mind that it is the **quality of the argument** that is important rather than who is perceived as victorious. Sometimes referred to as creative or **structured controversy**, the focus on quality arguments in a non-threatening and objective setting can promote rigorous debate, lead to a deeper understanding of the issues, and a greater respect for decision-making processes.

When Controversy Arises

- Clarify the nature of the conflict and the potential implications.
- Plan how to deal with discussion and debate of the issue.
- Be sensitive to the students and the community.
- Determine if any student or family will be personally affected.
- Discuss the issue and planned strategies with a colleague or the principal.
- Ensure that information is available to support all sides of the argument.
- Avoid taking sides, remain neutral and objective.

Preparing for Discussion and Debate

- Clearly define the issue.
- Identify outcomes and establish a purpose for the discussion or debate.
- Establish parameters and rules for the discussion (could include student input).
- Remind students that the discussion is focused on the issue, not on personalities (personal attacks should not be tolerated).
- Determine the format or strategy for the discussion (formal debate, persuasive speeches, structured controversy, panel discussion).
- Have students write an individual position paper (can be revised at end of exercise to see if views or understanding of issue has changed).

Discussion of Controversial Issues

- Ensure students understand the issue and can restate it in their own words.
- Assist students in finding reliable information from a variety of sources.
- Assist students in making the distinction between fact and opinion and between informed opinion and bias.

- Help students classify information into appropriate categories.
- Acknowledge that there may be many and diverse views on the issue.
- Listen to each view and respect the student's right to voice it without interruption.
- Allow time for all views to be presented fairly, questioned, and discussed.

Information Gathering Strategies

- A Gallery Walk of headlines, articles, and pictures to familiarize students with the topic.
- A Sharing Circle could be used for initial input by students (allow them to pass).
- Brainstorm and list what students already know about the issue.
- Seek to balance information on the various perspectives.
- Invite guest speakers representing the various perspectives to class.
- Show videos, news clips, or Internet sites representing various viewpoints.
- If appropriate, plan a field study to view the problem first hand.
- Assist students in finding and evaluating information sources.
- Have students make use of Pro/Con Discussion Charts to become familiar with other viewpoints (See BLM G-22). *Next page*

Presentation of Controversial Issues

- Panel discussion
- Town-hall type meeting
- Role-play of a situation related to the controversial issue
- Writing news articles, editorials, letter to the editor, or cartoons, to highlight different viewpoints
- Persuasive speeches representing the different viewpoints
- Conducting a formal debate or structured controversy
- A television interview to reflect each viewpoint
- Student presentations to the relevant groups involved in the issue (local council, hearings, commission, et cetera.)
- Ensure adequate time to complete presentations, and plan a short debriefing period at the end of each class to review, correct errors, or clarify misconceptions.

Debriefing

- Accept that there may not be a "right answer" or one that will satisfy everyone.
- Encourage some form of resolution to a problem, and seek compromise if possible.
- Encourage students to reflect and "make peace" with themselves and with classmates.
- Consider another Sharing Circle to see if views have changed or what has been learned.
- Have students write a journal entry or Exit Slip to reflect on the issue and how it may have influenced their views.
- Students write (or revise) individual position papers with supporting arguments for their view or how their views may have changed during the discussions of the controversial issue.

Pro and Con Discussion Chart

BLM
G-22

Name: _____ Date: _____

Topic: _____

Instructions:

- (a) Opposite every Pro, you should be able to list a Con. This activity makes you look at at least two sides of an issue and prepares you for discussion and debating.

Pro	Con

Pro and Con Discussion Chart

BLM
G-22

(b) Pick out the strongest PROs and list them. How many do you have?

Strongest PROs:

(c) Can you argue that this practice/idea is the best? What will you argue? (If you are not comfortable arguing for this practice/idea, what does that tell you?)
