*English Instructional Plan – Grades 9- 12: Current Events Persuasive Debate and Essay*

**Primary Strand: 9.5, 10.5, 11.5, 12.5**

**Integrated Strand/s: 9.1, 9.2, 9.6, 9.8, 10.1, 10.2, 10.6, 10.8, 11.1, 11.2, 11.8, 12.1, 12.2, 12.8**

**Essential Understanding:**

* understand that an author’s credentials and experiences contribute to his/her viewpoint
* understand an author’s viewpoint refers to a bias or subjectivity toward the subject; a viewpoint can be positive or negative
* understand that skilled readers of nonfiction texts and technical documents apply different reading strategies.
* understand that writing requires a recursive process that includes planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing
* understand that writing should be purposefully crafted, with attention to deliberate word choice, precise information, and vocabulary
* understand that voice and tone must be developed with awareness of audience and purpose

**Essential Knowledge, Skills, and Processes:**

* identify an author’s position/argument within informational text
* evaluate the clarity and accuracy of information found in informational texts
* make inferences and draw conclusions from complex informational text
* demonstrate comprehension and apply strategies to write about what is read
* write persuasively, organizing reasons logically and effectively
* analyze sources and determine the best information to support a position/argument
* use credible, current research and expert opinions to support a position/argument
* identify counterclaims and use counterarguments that address those claims
* compare/contrast and select evidence from multiple texts to strengthen a position/argument

**Primary SOL:**

* 9.5, 10.5, 11.5, 12.5 Non-fiction text analysis and analysis across multiple texts

**Reinforced (Related Standard) SOL:**

* 9.1, 10.1, 11.1, 12.1 Create and collaborate on multimodal presentations
* 9.2, 10.2, 11.2, 12.2 Evaluate media messages
* 9.6, 10.6, 11.6, 12.6 Written communication supported with evidence
* 9.8, 10.8, 11.8, 12.8 Research and evaluation of sources for reliability and credibility

**Academic Background/Language:**

* Some basic knowledge of current events and topics that affect the lives of teens and young adults in America
* Basic terminology of persuasive speaking and writing, such as position, counterclaims, and counterarguments

## Materials

* Notecards (optional)
* Current event articles on debatable issues relevant to the lives of teenagers and young adults. Possible topics entail current events surrounding the issues of gun control, Virginia driving age, drinking age, four-day school week, school lunches, violent video games, and teen or peer courts. Teachers should conduct a quick internet search of websites that provide relevant articles about current events topics and select two articles for each select current event; for example, if the teacher selects the current event of the Virginia driving age, the teacher would locate one article supporting raising the driving age in Virginia to 18 and one article supporting maintaining the current Virginia driving age.
* RAVEN and Argument Analysis Sheet (attached)
* Sample Current Event Topics and Writing Prompts
* Debate Note Sheet
* Graphic organizer
* Rubric for persuasive essay, found at <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/english/2017/hs-rubric-2017-standards.docx>
* Domain Peer and Self Evaluation
* End of Course Instruction Persuasive Writing Checklist, accessible at <http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/english/2010/online_writing/index.shtml>
* An MLA Citation Guide, either assessed online or in hard copy, and shared with students

## Student/Teacher Actions: What should students be doing? What should teachers be doing?

* Class Period 1 & 2: Current Event Articles Analysis and Debate (approximately two 60-minute class periods, depending on how much time is allocated to article analysis)
* Teacher will move students into groups of three or four. Teacher will want to make these groups ahead of time based on student dynamics, learning styles, and/or comfortability speaking in front of a small group.
* Teacher will assign a debatable current event topic to two groups. Teacher may write these topics and the corresponding pro or con side on notecards and hand out to groups. One group will receive one side or perspective of the issue and the other group will receive the other side or contrasting perspective on the same issue.
* Teacher can decide how many current event topics to assign to the class. Sample current event topics and prompts are included in the attached materials.
* Teacher will introduce article analysis and debate plan to students.
* Teacher introduction to student may read something like this: Many “hot” topics in today’s media concern juvenile crime, school, video games, and driving—all issues that are pertinent to teenager’s lives.
* Introduction to students: Working in groups of three or four, students will read two articles on one of these “hot” issues, such as the driving age, teen courts, video games, and a four-day school week. The teacher will assign each group one side to take on the issue, and students will work first on their own: reading the articles and while reading, brainstorming ideas to support their assigned position on the issue. Next, students will discuss and organize their ideas as a group and begin to prepare a persuasive argument that logically presents a strong case for their position. Each group should identify at least four major claims with supporting evidence and relevant details for their position using the Debate Note Sheet (attached). It will also be helpful for the group to discuss the relevant counterclaims to their position, so they can prepare for the hearing and responding to ideas on the opposing side of the issue (the counterarguments)—because all groups are going to debate this issue with another group in the classroom.
* Introduction to students: Two groups in the room will have assigned topic, but they will have prepared arguments for the two other sides. In a debate, all students will share their teams’ ideas and argument, listening to and then addressing the counterarguments and opposing viewpoints of the other group.
* Introduction to students: Students should take notes during this debate because they will then write a persuasive essay on their topic—but they may change positions on the topic in their essay if the opposing team convinces them to switch sides!
* Students will then read two current event articles related to their group’s assigned topic. Teacher may print these articles for the students or provide them online/on computer for students. Teacher should select current event articles that align with the class’s general reading abilities and levels and may perhaps even find the same article on various readability levels if necessary. Many online educational sites provide this service.
* As students read quietly, they should identify the author’s purpose for writing, main claims, and supporting evidence. While reading, students should also assess the credibility of the article and the author’s perspective by following the steps and answering the questions on the attached RAVEN and Argument Analysis Sheet.
* Once done reading individually, students will discuss their analysis of the articles and their findings and ideas with their small group and begin to brainstorm ideas for their debate.
* Students will fill out Debate Note Sheet (attached) while preparing for debate. Students should select their main claims and corresponding supporting evidence to support their position. Students may brainstorm ideas that they did not find in the articles, too—they may use their experiences, logical reasoning, and outside knowledge, too.
* Once all teams are ready with their main claims, supporting evidence, and preparation for counterclaims and counterarguments, teacher will move the two groups with the same topic so that the teams are sitting across from each other.
* Teacher will go over the structure of the debate: one team (called Team A for clarity here) will start the debate and one team member from Team A will state a main claim and support the claim with evidence. The opposing team (Team B) will then have the chance to counter the claim with their evidence. Team A will then have the chance to refute the counterclaim with more of their evidence. Next, Team B will start with their first claim and Team B will counter the claim. This pattern will repeat until every team member has presented a main claim in the debate. The goal is for every student on the team to present one new main claim. Various students may offer counterclaims and counterarguments.
* Before the debate starts, the teacher should ask the class what is the goal of the debate, sparking a conversation about the importance of debating claims, ideas, and evidence, not people. The teacher can ask students to brainstorm the rules they think they should follow in the debate. The teacher can write the students’ ideas down on large butcher paper or a white/chalk board to display during the debate as a reminder for students. As an alternative approach, individual teams could also brainstorm rules, write their ideas on construction paper, and then share out with the class to then create a class list of rules.
* As a suggestion in this brainstorm, the teacher should discuss how to use words and phrases like “I disagree/agree because of this reason…”, “However, the evidence from here \_\_\_\_ shows…”, “On the other hand, this could happen if this happens…”, “While some people believe this, many believe...”, and other such phrases.
* For the teacher, this debate usually takes about 15- 20 minutes, with the teacher circulating around the room and listening to students’ ideas, guiding and helping some teams if necessary (off-task behavior, students using loaded language or targeting arguments towards people instead of ideas, reticent students, etc.). Teacher may remind class of time left in debate and give the class a two-minute warning before the end.
* At the conclusion of the debate, teacher will direct students to fill out the rest of their note sheets, adding the ideas of the opposing team to their notes.
* Once students have finished their notes, teacher will ask students, “Who changed their minds as a result of the debate? Why? What arguments worked well in the debate? What did not work well?”. Teacher can transition this conversation into next steps of the debate—putting the claims and ideas discussed in today’s debate into a persuasive essay.
* Class Period 3: Persuasive Essay Brainstorm, Graphic Organizer, and Rubric Overview (approximately one 60-minute class period)
* The teacher can start class today with a recap of how a debate is similar to a persuasive essay—to win a debate, you need to organize your argument with main claims, supporting evidence, and refute the opposition’s ideas with logic and evidence. In a persuasive essay, the writer wants to “win” the argument as well, but now has the ability to do so in writing.
* The students can argue for the same side in their essays as they did in the debate, or they can switch sides if they were convinced by other team—however, students must select a clear stance for their essay (their position or thesis).
* The teacher can use the attached graphic organizer as a way for students to organize their notes and ideas from the debate into a model for an essay.
* The teacher should model filling out one graphic organizer on the board with a sample prompt/topic, one not debated in class. The teacher should model writing a thesis, brainstorming three main claims (topics for body paragraphs), and supporting ideas/evidence for those body paragraphs. This graphic organizer also allows the writer to brainstorm counterclaims and arguments for a concession paragraph, which the teacher should model as well.
* The teacher should also model that if students are going to use evidence from the articles that they read for the debate, the students need to properly cite their sources. This would be a good time to teach or refresh students on in-text citations for summarized, paraphrased, or directly cited text. A quick lesson on MLA citation would be appropriate, and the teacher could even model using an online citation tool for creating a citation for one of the articles used in the debate. Students often struggle with understanding that paraphrased or summarized information from another’s work has to be cited as well as direct quotations, so the teacher should offer a few examples of various forms of in-text citations. While the students are only working on their graphic organizers right now, the students could write the in-text citation next to a piece of evidence on the graphic organizer so they remember where that information came from when working on their outlines and rough drafts.
* Students should then work on their graphic organizers, while the teacher circulates around the room helping and prompting students as necessary.
* Since students debated these topics with others in the class, they can bounce ideas off of their group members while filling out the graphic organizer.
* Once students complete the graphic organizer, the teacher can model the development of persuasive writing for students.
* The teacher should check students’ graphic organizers for their progress and ideas before students begin outlining.
* The rest of the class period should be used as a writing workshop, with students working at their own pace. The teacher could set time goals, if necessary, by writing the time for each task on the board.
* Before class ends, the teacher should check the progress of the class and decide upon the next step for the rough draft (complete for homework or completing during the next class period’s writing workshop).
* The teacher should share the rubric (attached) with students before they begin working on their rough draft so students know the goals for the essay and the assessment measures. The teacher should go over the domains with students, ideally with a copy on the rubric on the board or in the hands of the students.
* Optional Class Period: Writing Workshop for writing rough draft in-class; otherwise, rough draft could be written outside of class. The teacher can decide if students need scaffolding/ more support with writing a rough draft in class or if they would be able to finish it for homework outside of class. If students write the rough draft in class, the teacher should circulate and help/prompt students as necessary. Students can also check in with each other while writing, especially utilizing their debate groups. Another idea is to offer part of class for working on the rough draft and finishing the rest of it for homework. This option gives students structure and also rewards students who are productive in class with less homework.
* Class Period 3: Persuasive Essay Draft Peer and Self-Editing, Checklist for Writers, Additional Rubric Overview (approximately one 60-minute class period)
* When students complete their rough drafts, they will then peer edit and self-reflect on their drafts using the attached peer and self-editing sheet entitled Domain Peer and Self Evaluation. Students could share their drafts with their partners via Google Drive or hard copy. Either way, students should read their partner’s essay over once without making any comments. With the second read, the students can begin to offer feedback and suggestions. The teacher can select these partners or students can self-select.
* After peer editing, the students will self-reflect on their strengths and weaknesses of their draft, setting goals for their final copies, also contained on the Domain Peer and Self Evaluation.
* The teacher should then model going through the Persuasive Essay Checklist for Writers (attached and hyperlinked), which students should complete individually afterwards.
* This may be a good point to remind students how to print a Works Cited page for their essay and to make sure their citations are done correctly. Again, many helpful online resources can provide assistance to students and teachers.
* The teacher can give students class time to edit, revise, ask questions, and seek feedback, while circulating around the room or individually meeting with students for quick, but helpful writing conferences. The teacher can ask students “What is one question you have about your essay?” or “What is one thing you’d like to be stronger in your essay?” These types of questions are more direct than asking students, “Do you need any help?”, to which often they will say, “No.”
* The teacher can offer final reminders for students and by the end of class make sure all students know the due date for the final essay.

**Assessment (Diagnostic, Formative, Summative)**

* The teacher can complete a diagnostic assessment before lesson by polling students’ knowledge on current event topics and their interest in certain topics. The teacher can also assess if students have participated in a debate before and if they know general debate protocol.
* Formative assessment during debate. While circulating around the room, the teacher can assess students’ abilities to carefully select and use evidence to support their ideas and their abilities to identify and utilize counterclaims and counterarguments. The teacher can also assess participation and collaboration during the debate.
* Formative assessment during planning, outlining, and drafting stages of essay writing. The teacher should check in with each student individually during the writing process to assess student progress and offer individualized help. The teacher could give due dates for each step of the progress or require that students show the teacher each step when he/she completes them. This process can also be facilitated through Google Drive, which would allow the teacher to monitor student progress on his/her planning and writing virtually if the student adds the teacher as a collaborator on the Google document.
* Summative assessment of persuasive essay via rubric. The teacher and students should examine and discuss the writing rubric before its use so students are cognizant of the assessment criteria. The teacher should use this rubric to grade the essay, which may be a quiz or test grade depending on teacher choice and class criteria.

**Writing Connections:**

* Students could write a letter to their local school board, local newspaper, or school newspaper (as relevant to topic) expressing the opinions they developed in their debate and essay. The teacher can model adapting the essay to a letter format.
* To further students’ writing abilities, students could revise and resubmit their persuasive essay after teacher feedback and initial grading for a revised grade or additional points. Students could also visit the school Writing Center, if applicable.

**Extensions and Connections (for all students)**

* Collaboration with history class:Students could research historic “debates” and their effect on American society and culture (such as Roe vs. Wade, Brown vs. Board of Education).
* Collaboration with political science or government class: Students could watch a historic or current presidential debate and discuss candidates’ use of evidence in debate. Students could also learn about logical fallacies in an extension lesson on persuasion and identify the types of fallacies commonly used in presidential debates.
* The teacher could ask the school’s debate coach or team to come speak to the class about how they prepare for their debate competitions and the role research plays in their preparation.

**Strategies for Differentiation**

* Advanced classes and/or students: Students can complete additional research on their assigned current event topic that they could integrate and cite properly in their persuasive essay. The teacher could also require that students integrate another form of media into their essays, such as an image, infographic, video, or another mixed media form, which would require additional instruction by the teacher on how to analyze non-print sources and integrate into writing as evidence. Another differentiation strategy for more advanced writers entails the teacher modeling how students can integrate counterclaims and counterarguments throughout their essay in body paragraphs, instead of composing a separate concession paragraph. This type of concession integration in persuasive writing is more complex but logically flows with a persuasive argument.
* ELL techniques: Using close reading strategies, as students read an article, they should highlight words they do not know and annotate what they think the word might mean using context clues. As students are reading individually or in small groups, teacher should walk around and monitor the words students are highlighting to offer assistance and support. Students can complete a partner discussion of articles before group discussion with a structured graphic organizer made by the teacher to align with the articles. The teacher could also select current event topics of interest to students’ cultural backgrounds and prior knowledge, which could be done through the teacher’s diagnostic assessment.
* SWD: Teacher can change the pace of lesson by devoting more class time to reading and analyzing articles, which could be done as a class instead of individually and then in groups. The teacher could also assign one current event topic to entire class and discuss main ideas for debate as a class instead of solely with group. Then students could select ideas from the class brainstorm for their assigned debate.

*Note: The following pages are intended for classroom use for students as a visual aid to learning.*

**RAVEN Analysis of Sources: Evaluating Sources – Credibility and Author’s Perspective**

Article Title:

Source of the Article:

**Reputation:**

What do you know about the reputation of the author, the sources, and the publication? Do past actions or lies indicate the author, sources, or publication may not be reliable? Is the author, sources, or publication in a position of authority?

**Ability to Observe:**

Is the author in a position allows access to reliable evidence? If the article is about an event, did the author actually observe the event?

**Vested Interest:**

Does the author have a personal stake in the topic or event? Would the author gain anything by lying? Would the author gain anything by telling the truth?

**Expertise:**

Does the author have specialized knowledge on the topic or event?

Does the evidence come from a source that has expertise on the topic or event?

**Neutrality:**

Is the author neutral about the issue or is bias evident? Is the source of the evidence neutral or biased?

**Argument Analysis Template**

1. Does the author have an argument? If yes, what is the main idea?
2. What reasons does the author give to support his or her main idea?
3. What evidence does the author use to support these reasons? Is it credible? Is it biased?
4. Are these reasons and evidence convincing? Why or why not? Are there implicit assumptions?
5. Are the reasons presented in a logical order, as a line of reasoning? Do the reasons clearly link to one another and to the conclusion/thesis?
6. Does the author make a reasoned evaluation of other people's views that contradict their own? (Does he or she address counter-arguments? )
7. What do you think was the author's purpose in writing this piece?

**Sample Current Event Topics and Writing Prompts**

Position Topic 1: Driving Age

Because of safety concerns, many states have increased the age at which teens can begin to drive. Your state legislature is considering raising the minimum driving age from 16 to 18. Do you think the minimum driving age should be raised? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Position Topic 2: Teen Courts

“Creating courtrooms where teens act as jurors, lawyers, and sometimes judges represents a new approach to administering justice in the United States. Also referred to as "peer courts" or "youth courts," teen courts have been growing in the U.S. justice system since the 1980s. The tribunals often feature teenage jurors, who deliberate over the guilt or innocence of the defendant. With more-serious felony offenses—such as rape or murder—handled by the juvenile and adult justice systems, teen courts typically see cases involving nonviolent crimes, such as shoplifting, traffic violations and underage alcohol use. If found guilty, a defendant is handed a sentence deemed appropriate by his or her peers. Teen jurors, unlike jurors in the juvenile and adult justice systems, cannot recommend jail time. Should ‘teen courts’ judge cases involving young criminal offenders?” Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Citation: "Teen Courts: Should "teen courts" judge cases involving young criminal offenders?" Issues & Controversies, Infobase Learning, 10 Mar. 2006, http://icof.infobaselearning.com/recordurl.aspx?ID=2130. Accessed 14 Nov. 2018.

Position Topic 3: Video Games

“The debate over violent video games has raged since the 1970s, when such games first became common…The lack of a scientific consensus on violent video games has not kept government officials at the local, state, and national levels from voicing their opinions and attempting to impose restrictions. These efforts have run up against the opposition of the video game industry, advocates of free speech, and many court decisions. Should the government impose restrictions on the sale and purchase of violent video games?” Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Citation: "Violent Video Games: Should the government pass laws restricting children's access to violent video games?" Issues & Controversies, Infobase Learning, 28 Apr. 2014, http://icof.infobaselearning.com/recordurl.aspx?ID=14190. Accessed 14 Nov. 2018.

Position Topic 4:

To conserve energy and resources, some businesses have adopted a four-day work week, with each day consisting of ten hours. Should your school follow this model by extending the school day two hours? After considering the benefits and disadvantages to a four-day school week, take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

**Debate Note Sheet**

Create a developed persuasive argumentthrough our class discussion:

1. Generate ideas through your individual brainstorm.
2. Collaborate with your group to organize the ideas into solid arguments. Write at least FOUR of these supportive arguments, or main claims, in the appropriate box below.
3. During and after your debate, *take notes*! The opposing team’s ideas present possible counterclaims and may inspire more ideas to defend your side of the argument.

My Assigned Topic and Position:

My Initial Ideas:

My Group’s Position, Main Claims, and Supporting Evidence:

Potential Counterclaims Present by Opposition:

Opposing Group’s Position, Main Claims, and Supporting Evidence: (Gathered during and after the debate)