

High School (9-12) Persuasive/Argument Writing Prompts

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IntelliMetric® Prompts

A Controversial Issue

It seems our society continually wrestles with controversial issues that have no clear resolutions because of the complexities of the circumstances and people involved. Capital punishment, euthanasia, faith healing, suicide, and abortion are just a few of the controversial issues facing our nation and the world. As the media highlights these issues, individuals are left to decide which side they agree with, and in some cases, join efforts in persuading legislators or the general public to agree with their views.

Select a controversial issue that interests you. After researching the subject using iSEEK™, decide which side of the issue you support. Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you persuade the reader to agree with your position on this issue. Be sure to include and cite specific details and examples to support your argument, and remember to address opposing viewpoints.

A Global Language

Currently there are hundreds of languages spoken in countries all over the world. Yet, due to increases in global business and communications, it is becoming more essential for citizens of the world to be able to communicate with one another effectively. So, do you think the world should adopt one global language? If so, what language should be used?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you defend your position. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

A High School Travel Abroad Program in Your School

These days, there are an increasing number of travel abroad programs available to students at many high schools. Some of these programs focus on studying or volunteering abroad for a week or semester or are offered as precollege programs. These programs expose students to a variety of diverse cultures and experiences that can enrich the regular school curriculum, especially in the study of history, literature, and foreign language. Imagine that your school, however, does not offer any such programs.

In a detailed letter to your principal or school district superintendent, persuade him/her to develop a travel abroad program in your school.

A Sense of Wonder

"Wonder is a pause of reason, a sudden cessation of the mental progress, which lasts only while the understanding is fixed upon some single idea...It may be remarked with equal truth that ignorance is often the effect of wonder." -*The Rambler, No. 137*, by Samuel Johnson

"The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed." -Albert Einstein

Samuel Johnson and Albert Einstein share different opinions regarding our sense of wonder and its overall usefulness. Do you agree with Einstein or Johnson's view of wonder?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you persuade your teacher to agree with your definition of wonder. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Adding A Class to Your School's Curriculum

Your principal is currently considering adding a new class to your school's curriculum and is seeking suggestions from students. What new course do you think your school should offer? How would this course benefit students?

Write a letter to your principal recommending a new class and convincing him or her to offer it in your high school.

Advertising and its Influence on Society

Advertising plays a significant role in society that is readily apparent to anyone who watches television, listens to the radio, reads newspapers, uses the Internet, or simply observes billboards on streets and buses. Advertising has fierce critics as well as staunch advocates. Critics claim that advertisements are propaganda, while advocates counter that advertising fosters trade and promotes prosperity.

After researching the impact of advertising on society, write a detailed argumentative essay presenting your position on advertising as a positive or negative influence on society. Include your assessment of advertising and how it affects an individual's perceptions, purchasing habits, and way of life. Include facts and details from your sources and address the counterargument.

Advertising E-Cigarettes

E-cigarettes are a booming business among smokers who want to light up indoors as well as smokers who want to quit. However, as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported, use of e-cigarettes is also growing among children. Currently, e-cigarette makers have a tremendous amount of

latitude in the U.S. to market their products as they choose, including on television, where traditional cigarette ads have been banned since 1971.

Because they are a relatively new product, e-cigarettes, which deliver nicotine to the lungs through a battery-generated vapor rather than tobacco smoke, are not subject to federal rules that govern things like product sales and ingredients. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is expected to propose rules that could govern how and where e-cigarettes can be sold, including whether or not they can be sold to minors. However, even when the FDA does establish these rules, it is still unclear which government agency will ultimately be responsible for regulating e-cigarette advertising.

In the meantime, "the marketing that you're seeing in these cigarettes now, it's the Wild West," states Stanton Glantz, director of the Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education at the University of California, San Francisco. "They're using celebrities, movies, television—it's just like getting into a time machine."

Excerpt from:

"It's Back To The Future For E-Cigarette Ads At Least For Now" by April Fehling, NPR

In a multi-paragraph essay, explain the author's argument regarding the regulation of e-cigarette advertising and discuss your stance on the issue. Support your position by providing reasons and examples from your own experience, observations, or reading.

Advertising on School Grounds

Schools across the nation often have to contend with a lack of adequate funds. As a result, school district administrators have had to find creative ways to obtain additional revenue. Some schools have allowed corporate sponsors to provide money and/or equipment in exchange for advertising on school grounds. Proponents of such plans assert that schools desperately need the funding/equipment and that students benefit from such corporate sponsorships. Opponents argue that these arrangements allow corporations to treat school children as potential consumers, not learners, and that schools should be safe from commercial pressure.

Write a letter to your local school board either supporting or opposing a plan to allow corporate sponsors to provide money and/or equipment in exchange for advertising on school grounds.

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After-School Job

You are trying to decide whether to take an after-school job during the school year. The money would be helpful, but you would have to give up something else to find time to work.

Write a letter to your parent(s) persuading them that you should or should not get a job during high school.

Alternate Energy Sources

Electricity is necessary for the operation of everyday electronic devices such as televisions, computers, microwaves and refrigerators. Suppose there were a global force that stopped the flow of electrons. Convince the public what energy sources you would set up and use in your home to help you survive and why. Include your own ideas, insights, and understanding of the problem.

Are Expensive Clothes Worth It?

Some people buy expensive clothing because spending the extra money makes them feel like they are getting a better quality item. Some just like to wear specific clothing because it is a brand name. Others say that wearing expensive and brand name clothing makes them feel better about themselves. Society makes some people feel that it is "cooler" to only wear brand names. Looking good and having nice clothes may increase confidence, but should that confidence come just from having an expensive wardrobe?

In a well-developed essay, articulate your position on whether or not expensive clothes are worth buying. Include facts and details to support your argument.

Ban Cell Phone Use in Some Places?

Many people enjoy the freedom of using cell phones wherever they go. Some people argue, however, that cell phone use should be limited because it may disturb others. Should people be allowed to use cell phones in places like stores, restaurants, and movie theaters, or should cell phone use in such places be banned? Take a position on this question. Use reasons and specific examples to support your views.

Beauty Pageants: Rewarding or Degrading?

Beauty pageants have been a part of our culture for many years, especially with the Miss America Pageant, which was first held in Atlantic City in 1921. However, beauty pageants, such as Miss America, Miss USA, and Miss Universe, have been criticized for a number of years regarding the way in which the female participants are portrayed, with some critics arguing that these events objectify and degrade women. The swimsuit competition, in particular, came under scrutiny in 1996. A televised

viewer poll was even held to determine whether or not the swimsuit competition should be continued, and the majority of viewers voted to keep it. What is your opinion on beauty pageants? Do you feel that they are demeaning to women, or do you feel that these pageants provide good opportunities for the winners to get immersed in community involvement?

In a well-developed essay, argue your position on the issue of beauty pageants. Remember to provide facts and examples to support your argument.

Benefits of Globalization

Do the benefits of globalization outweigh the costs? After reading the teacher-provided texts, write an essay that argues your position on whether the benefits of globalization outweigh the costs. Support your position with evidence from your reading. Be sure to acknowledge competing views. Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate, clarify, and support your position.

Cell Phone Ban for Operators of Motor Vehicles

Your state legislature is considering adopting a new law that would ban all cell phone use while operating a motor vehicle. What is your position on this law?

After reading the teacher-provided informational texts, write an essay that addresses the question of adopting a law banning all cell phone use while operating a motor vehicle. Support your position with evidence from the texts, and be sure to acknowledge competing views. Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.

Challenges of Parenthood

Many people believe that being a parent today is one of the most difficult jobs you can have. Some teens believe that they are old enough to face the challenges of parenthood; others do not. State your position on the issue and provide reasons for your decision. Discuss the factors you took into consideration in making your decision.

Challenging Authority

In your reading experiences, you undoubtedly have encountered characters that challenge authority—be it in the form of a person, a group, or an institution. Of these characters, whom do you most admire? What were the circumstances surrounding the challenge to authority? What does your choice of character reveal about you?

In a multi-paragraph essay, discuss a literary character you admire because he or she challenged authority. In your discussion, be sure to include the circumstances of the challenge and what your choice reveals about you.

Changes the Next President Should Make

In 2008, the Democratic Party made history by being the first national political party to nominate an African American to be its Presidential candidate. This historic choice underscores one of the central themes of Barack Obama's candidacy, which is "Change." Indeed, the need for "change" is a frequent rallying cry of politicians vying for votes in national elections. What advice would you provide to a candidate, who wants to implement changes, to help him or her run an effective and successful campaign?

In a well-organized essay, considering the current condition of the nation, persuade a candidate to make an important change. Be sure to support your position with examples and reasons drawn from your studies and observations.

Choosing a Rewarding Occupation

People choose their occupations for different reasons: to make money, to help others, or to make the world a better place.

What do you think is the most rewarding occupation you could have, excluding illegal activities? Write a newspaper editorial to convince readers which occupation is the most rewarding and why.

Choosing a School

A foreign student is considering several American schools to attend.

Why would your school be the best choice? Write an essay persuading the student that he or she should attend your school.

Cloning

Scientists have successfully cloned animals like Dolly the sheep. Some people hope that cloning techniques will be used to clone humans someday, while others strongly oppose this use of technology. What is your position on cloning humans?

Write a persuasive essay articulating your position on the cloning of humans. Use specific examples and details to support your views.

Competition or Competence

"Trying to be number one and trying to do a task well are two different things."
--Alfie Kohn

Many apply the law of the jungle (i.e. "the survival of the fittest") to human behavior. Is it more important to be highly competitive or highly competent in order to be successful?

Write a multi-paragraph essay supporting your position on this issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples from your own experiences or readings.

Competitive Sport Requirement

Your school board is considering adopting a new rule that requires every student to play at least one competitive sport in order to graduate from high school.

Do you think this is a good idea? Why or why not? Write a letter to persuade members of the school board that they should or should not adopt this rule.

Conflict Resolution Programs in Schools

School violence has become one of the main concerns for parents and administrators throughout America. In order to curb parental fears and concerns, Conflict Resolution programs have been introduced into many school districts. Conflict Resolution programs mainly start at the beginning of the school year, and consist of simulated situations and discussions that best aid students in how best to handle their anger and many difficult situations they face at school. Peer interaction, problem solving skills and strategies and role playing are other key factors that are stressed within these classes. Some believe that schools should use their money to make these programs consistent throughout the year in order to better aid students, while critics of Conflict Resolution programs view them as a waste of precious funds and classroom time. They believe that most schools already have counselors and established programs to aid students in dealing with difficult encounters. They also argue that in reality, school violence is a larger societal problem of violence and that simply putting money into several school programs will do little to defeat a larger social issue.

Do you believe that Conflict Resolution programs are a feasible means to help prevent school violence or do you agree with the program's critics and see it as a waste of important school dollars? In a detailed essay, articulate your position on this issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Consequences of Success

"Each success only buys an admission ticket to a more difficult problem."

-- Henry Kissinger (1923 -), *Wilson Library Bulletin*, March 1979

While most of us strive for success, we are sometimes surprised to learn that it is not always a good thing. In fact, some people believe it can lead to more difficult problems. Do you agree or disagree?

Write a multi-paragraph essay supporting your position on this issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples from your own experiences or readings.

Department Store Dilemma

A large department store chain wants to open a store just outside your town or city. The new store would attract customers from miles around and would create jobs. It would also drive some local store owners out of business and would cause traffic problems.

Write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper to convince people why they should support the new store or prevent it from being built.

Dependence on Calculators

The first mechanical calculator was invented in 1642, but it wasn't until modern times that the average person relied heavily on a machine to complete mathematical calculations. Today, there are calculators with specific applications, including one which will convert measurements for recipes. Have we become too dependent on calculators? What might be the long-term consequences of this dependence?

In a well-developed essay, articulate your position on the level of our dependence on calculators. Include examples and reasons for your position.

Do Teens Consider the Consequences?

Some people say that most teenagers are careless and do not think about the consequences of their actions. Do you agree or disagree with this idea? Take a position on this question. Use reasons and specific examples to support your opinion.

Do You Agree With a Curfew?

The mayor of your town is considering establishing a 10:00 pm curfew for all children under the age of 18. What do you think?

Write a multi-paragraph letter to persuade your mayor that he or she should or should not enact the curfew.

Do You Agree with Capital Punishment?

"The crime sets the victim and the murderer apart; if the victim died, the murderer does not deserve to live. The thought that there are some who think that murderers have as much right to live as their victims oppresses me. So does the thought that Stalin or Hitler should have the right to go on living." - Ernest Van Den Haag, Professor of Jurisprudence and Public Policy, Fordham University

"There is an alternative to capital punishment: long-term imprisonment. Such a punishment is retributive and can be made appropriately severe to reflect the gravity of the crime . . . Each of us has a hand in the killing, and unless such killings are absolutely necessary they cannot be justified." - Hugo Adam Bedau, Professor of Philosophy, Tufts University

Consider these quotes and write an essay either in support of or in opposition to the death penalty. When writing, you might want to consider the possible execution of the innocent, whether the death penalty qualifies as "cruel and unusual punishment," and whether or not capital punishment is a deterrent.

Driver's Ed or Personal Finance?

Young people need many skills to be successful adults after high school: They should learn how to properly save and spend money in order to manage their finances, but they also require driving skills in order to be safe on the road.

Imagine that your school has announced that it will sponsor either a Driver's Education or Personal Finance class for all seniors in your school. Which class do you think is more important for students at your school? Write an essay to your principal in which you support the choice of one class or the other. Be sure to support your choice with relevant details and arguments.

Eliminating Extracurricular Activities

Your school district has recently decided to eliminate your favorite sport or club due to funding problems. Do you think that eliminating sports teams or clubs is a good way for school districts to help reduce spending? Why or why not?

Write an essay either to persuade the district to uphold its decision or to persuade the district to change its decision and reinstate the sport or club.

Eliminating the Penny

For many years, there has been a growing debate over whether or not the penny should be eliminated from all cash transactions. There are vastly differing opinions on the effect the elimination of the penny would have on the government, businesses, and individuals. What is your opinion on this issue? Should the penny be eliminated?

Write a persuasive letter to your Congressman or Congresswoman arguing for or against the elimination of the penny. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Emphasis on Sports

Some people believe that sports are an important part of school life. Others think that there is too much emphasis placed on sports. Which position do you take?

Write an essay persuading the reader to accept your position.

Enough is Enough! Or is it?

"The ideals which have lighted my way, and time after time have given me new courage to face life cheerfully, have been Kindness, Beauty, and Truth. The trite subjects of human efforts, possessions, outward success, luxury have always seemed to me contemptible." -- Albert Einstein

Many "wise" people routinely complain that Americans have become too concerned with material possessions. Einstein's quote demonstrates just this sentiment. Yet we cannot escape the fact that the American consumer is responsible for nearly two-thirds of all economic activity in the United States. So surely, many people must enjoy and find comfort in buying, selling, and trading material possessions. Do you?

Write a persuasive essay in which you articulate your position on this issue. What "rule" would you offer to a friend to guide him or her in leading the right kind of life with respect to material possessions? Be sure to support your stance with examples and reasons drawn from your studies, personal experience, and/or observations.

Essential Job Skills

Many people have argued that the skills needed to be successful in today's workforce have changed. What skills do you feel an individual needs to be successful in a job today? Why do you feel these skills are most important?

In an essay to be read by a teacher, identify the skills you feel are most needed by an individual to be successful at work and provide reasons to persuade your teacher that these are the most critical skills for success.

Extracurricular Activities Requirement

Your school is considering a proposal that would only allow students who have a "C" average or better to participate in extracurricular activities such as sports, band and clubs. Students who do not have an average grade of "C" or better would not be able to participate in these activities. Do you feel that students should be required to maintain a "C" average or better in order to participate in extracurricular activities?

Write a letter persuading your principal to accept your recommendation on whether or not students should be required to have a "C" average or better to participate in extracurricular activities.

Four-Day School Week?

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.

Genetically Modified Foods

Read the passage about genetically modified foods. Considering the risks and benefits of this new technology, what do you think about the use of such foods? Write a well-developed essay in which you articulate a position on the use of genetically modified foods. Support your position with information from the passage or other research you have conducted.

What are Genetically Modified Foods?

The safety and availability of food continues to be one of the most pressing issues on the global agenda. In many countries, poor families struggle to find enough food to maintain their health and vitality; young people in these areas often do not receive the proper nutrition and vitamins from the foods they eat. In the United States, on the other hand, while food is abundant, many people are concerned by the pesticides that contaminate the food and the bacteria that foul meats on their way to our dinner tables. Some scientists and industry experts believe that genetically engineered foods could provide a much sought after solution to all of these problems. Often referred to as "bio-engineering" or "genetic modification," the act of genetically engineering foods has itself become a very controversial issue debated in parliaments, grocery stores, and kitchens around the world.

Genetic modification is the act of combining various genes from different organisms, so-called recombinant DNA technology, resulting in a brand new, modified organism. Scientists claim that these new organisms possess extremely beneficial traits which will ultimately benefit humanity. As this technology is perfected, genetically modified organisms are becoming more and more common, showing up in such products as medicines, vaccines, foods, and industrial materials. Still, genetic modification is particularly important to food manufacturers. Foods can now be created that are resistant to pests and viruses, or which contain higher amounts of important vitamins and minerals. The larger, more nutritious, and longer-lasting foods that are being engineered in laboratories will ultimately feed more people while having an extended shelf-life in markets across the world. Advocates of genetic modification also believe that plants and animals that have been genetically engineered will soon provide enhanced taste, leaner meats, and healthier eggs and milk.

Though many scientists trumpet the benefits of genetic modification, there is a rising tide of critics who have serious concerns about its effectiveness and safety. Many farmers, citizens, and scientists believe that the companies researching genetic engineering have rushed to distribute various products with little concern for their possible long-term effects on humans. One of the major uncertainties is that the new genes or proteins introduced into the food supply might produce unforeseen toxins in animals, fruits and vegetables, and the environment. These new toxins could cause harm in the short or long term by producing diseases or mutations of which scientists have little knowledge. Food allergies related to the modified foods could even prove fatal to unsuspecting consumers. Other concerns include whether corporations and wealthier nations of the world will unfairly benefit from genetic

engineering by making smaller, poorer countries dependent on these foods and technologies. Some countries have even gone so far as to outlaw the sale of genetically modified foods until they are better understood.

Gun Control and Violence

"Guns don't kill people, people kill people," is an expression often quoted by those who support the right to freely carry firearms. For many years, organizations such as the National Rifle Association (NRA) have pointed to the high rate of gun violence in the United States and compared it with the low rates in Europe; this comparison was done in order to stress their point that gun violence is a cultural/societal problem that should not impede anyone's right to own firearms. Those who advocate gun control, and oppose the NRA, point to the United States' high level of gun ownership (as compared to other countries) as one of the leading reasons for the increase in the amounts of murders and violence associated with guns. They also point to the easy accessibility of guns in America as one of the major causes of the high level of gun violence.

In a well-developed essay, articulate whether you believe that gun violence is a societal/cultural problem or an issue of gun control that can be legislated. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Internet Censorship

“Internet censorship around the world occurs on many levels from the filtering of inappropriate websites in school computer labs to government removal of access to controversial websites. In the United States, we enjoy the freedom to express ourselves freely, which should include access to and availability of content on the Internet. School districts and governments do not have the right to withhold access to largely available information, regardless of the nature of the content. If a computer user is mature enough to access the Internet, he or she should be able to view any and all websites.” – W. W. Webster

Discuss Webster’s position and whether you agree or disagree with his analysis of the situation. Be sure to support your position with facts and details from your experiences, observations, or research.

Internet Classrooms vs. Traditional Classrooms

With advancements in technology, some students have chosen to complete their schoolwork through the Internet, rather than in traditional classrooms. Those who support a traditional classroom approach to learning argue that it provides more of an opportunity for students to interact with the teacher and other students. Those who feel that learning over the Internet is better argue that it allows students to learn anytime and anywhere they choose.

Do you feel education is better provided in traditional classrooms or when offered over the Internet? Write an essay to be read by a classroom teacher in which you persuade the reader that either traditional classroom education or Internet-based learning is better.

Invasion of Privacy

Notices from credit card companies, ads on television, warnings on the evening news, release forms at the doctor's office, and locker searches at school all address the issue of invasion of privacy. Some are opposed to what they believe is an increased invasion of privacy for individuals. Others believe that national and individual safety and security necessitate some invasion of privacy for individuals.

In a well-developed essay, articulate your position on your right to privacy. Include facts and examples to support your position.

Is Cheating Always Wrong?

"I would prefer even to fail with honor than to win by cheating." – Sophocles

"'Tis my opinion every man cheats in his own way, and he is only honest who is not discovered." – Susannah Centlivre

Recently, the idea of cheating has gotten much attention in the world of sports, entertainment, and politics. Many celebrities have been accused of gaining a competitive edge through dishonest means. While cheating has mainly been publicly condemned, there are many that feel there are times when cheating can actually be a way of making things better. They believe there is nothing wrong with making yourself a better athlete, entertainer, or politician if what you have done makes the event more entertaining, or assists the greater good. Do you feel that there are times when cheating is acceptable, or is cheating never justified?

In a detailed essay, articulate your position on whether cheating is always wrong. Use facts and examples to support your position.

Is Music a Luxury or Important for Survival?

Music has become a major part of almost everything in our lives. Does this mean that music is important for us to survive, or is music a luxury for us? Write a persuasive argument in favor of your choice.

Is Summer Homework Beneficial?

Summer homework for students has become a controversial issue and the subject of myriad books, articles, and commentaries. Although teachers believe in the benefits of academic work assigned for the summer, research conducted on its merits would seem to indicate that the benefits are questionable. After reading the teacher-provided texts, write an essay that argues your position on whether or not summer homework is beneficial. Support your position with evidence from the texts. Be sure to acknowledge competing views.

It Should Be Law!

New laws are continually being put into place in order to provide order, rules, and regulations that guide the actions of the members of the country, state, or local municipality.

Write an essay in which you persuade your local townspeople that a certain new law should be put into place. In your essay, provide an explanation of the law you wish to enact and at least three reasons in support of the need for the law. You may support your reasons with statistics, quotes, or other research you have gathered on the issue.

Later School Opening

Current research suggests that because teenagers have different sleep patterns, they would benefit from beginning the school day at a later time. Some schools are considering holding the school day from 9am-4pm. Is this new time schedule more beneficial or detrimental to the well-being of the students?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you persuade the Board of Education to agree with your position on this issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Limiting the Amount of Homework

Your school is reviewing its homework policy and has asked for your recommendation whether there should be a limit on the amount of homework assigned by teachers. Some students feel that the amount of homework should be limited to allow more time for other extracurricular activities. Some teachers, however, are opposed to limits on the amount of homework they can assign and believe that they are in the best position to decide how much homework is required for learning.

Do you feel that the amount of homework assigned by teachers should be limited? Write an essay to be read by a classroom teacher supporting or opposing a policy to limit the amount of homework assigned to students.

Mandatory Recycling

Your class is studying recycling. On the one hand recycling can help protect the environment. On the other hand recycling is inconvenient and places an added burden on citizens. Do you feel that recycling should be required of all citizens? Why?

Write an essay persuading your legislator to accept your recommendation on whether or not recycling should be mandatory.

Minimum 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.

Nature vs. Nurture

Psychologists have argued for centuries regarding the influences of nature (genetic influences) and nurture (environmental influences) on the human personality. There is evidence to support both views, but the question is ultimately, which of the two, nature or nurture, plays the greatest role in shaping our personality.

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you state and defend your position. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Our Changing Society

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single minute before starting to improve the world."
--Anne Frank

While society is currently undergoing many rapid changes, people disagree about their direction. Has the world, in fact, changed for the better or worse?

Write a multi-paragraph essay supporting your position on this issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples from your own experiences or readings.

Paying Students to Keep Schools Safe

There are schools that offer a cash reward to individuals who provide information about students carrying weapons to school. Rewards are also given for tips about drug use and vandalism.

Imagine that your school is considering a similar policy. Do you think students should be paid to tell on each other? Write a persuasive letter to your principal convincing him or her to agree with you. Make sure to include specific details and examples to support your arguments.

Persuade a Tourist to Visit

Tourism committees spend a great deal of money each year advocating natural landmarks of states and countries. By using media such as posters, magazines advertisements, television commercials, and radio advertisements, committees are able to send a message about beautiful places, and hopefully convince some tourists to travel to those places.

Suppose you have been hired by a tourism committee. Write a persuasive essay in which you identify a place in the world that has something tourists might find interesting. Explain precisely what makes this particular place so special. Develop your ideas so that a potential tourist would be persuaded to visit the place you have identified.

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Rating Movies, Music, and Video Games

The amount and intensity of violence, profanity, and other mature content that has been showing up in children's movies, video games, and music lately has stirred quite a public debate about the use of "ratings," such as "MA," to indicate "Mature Content." Some authorities believe ratings should be provided to help parents control what their children can access. Critics, on the other hand, believe such ratings are a waste of time. What do you think?

Write an editorial for your school newspaper in which you argue whether or not you think ratings are an effective way to control children's access to movies, music, and video games with mature content. Be sure to include specific examples to support your argument.

Recommending Literature

Your school is reviewing the literature to be included in high school English courses. You have been asked to recommend a book, story or other piece of literature to be included in the list of books to be read by high school students. Which piece of literature would you include in a high school English course? Why would you choose it?

Write an essay to be read by a teacher persuading your school to include the piece of literature you recommend in the new reading list.

Reinstating the Draft

"Every citizen should be a soldier. This was the case with the Greeks and Romans, and must be that of every free state." -- Thomas Jefferson

With American forces attending to crises across the globe, some experts believe the United States should increase the size of its military by reinstating a mandatory draft. Thomas Jefferson believed that every person has a duty to fight in America's wars. Do you?

In a well-organized essay, discuss whether or not you think the United States should reinstate the draft. Be sure to support your position with significant details from your readings or personal experience.

Reputation or Success?

"Regard your good name as the richest jewel you can possibly be possessed of -- for credit is like fire; when once you have kindled it you may easily preserve it, but if you once extinguish it, you will find it an arduous task to rekindle it again. The way to gain a good reputation is to endeavor to be what you desire to appear." -- Socrates

In today's society many people forgo their "good name" as they strive to get to the top: business leaders break ethical rules to earn a profit; sports stars use drugs to enhance their performance; political leaders accept bribes to please their constituents. Do you think success, wealth, and power have become so important in today's society that they have overtaken the need for a "good name" and reputation?

Requiring Protective Helmets

Do you think that people under the age of 18 should be required to wear protective helmets when skateboarding, in-line skating, bicycling, snowboarding, or skiing? Why or why not?

Write a persuasive essay for or against the idea that young people should be required to wear helmets when taking part in these activities.

Requiring School Uniforms

Your school is considering requiring all students to wear uniforms during school. Do you feel it is a good idea or a bad idea to require students to wear uniforms? Why?

Write an essay persuading your principal to accept your recommendation on whether or not your school should require students to wear uniforms.

Responding to a Quotation About Luck

Carefully read the following quote from Oprah Winfrey:

"Luck is a matter of preparation meeting opportunity."

What do you think the speaker was trying to say about the notions of luck and opportunity? Do you agree or disagree with the speaker?

In a well-developed essay, discuss what you think this quote means and whether you agree with it or not. Use specific examples from your studies, personal experience, and/or observations to support your interpretation.

Responding to a Quote by George Bernard Shaw

Carefully read the following quote by George Bernard Shaw:

"There are two tragedies in life. One is not to get your heart's desire. The other is to get it."

In this quote, what do you think this speaker was trying to say about your dreams versus reality? Do you agree or disagree with the speaker?

In a well-developed essay, discuss what you think this quote means and whether you agree with it or not. Use specific examples from your studies, personal experience, and/or observations to support your interpretation.

Rhetorical Devices: Princess Diana Death Responses

Read three texts responding to the 1997 death of Princess Diana of Wales. Suggested texts include the BBC News article "Princess Diana Dies in Paris Crash," Earl Spencer's eulogy to the Princess, and the lyrics to Elton John's "Goodbye England's Rose."

Write an argumentative essay that identifies the rhetorical devices used in each example, and analyze which text is most appropriate and effective in achieving its purpose. Consider the interaction of speaker, audience, and subject. Be sure to support your position with evidence from the texts.

Robots in the Workforce

Artificial Intelligence is increasingly becoming a part of our everyday lives. Some robots use artificial intelligence, are highly sophisticated, and even have humanoid features. Your school district has just received a technology grant and plans to purchase robots to serve as teachers' assistants. Before they place an order, they would like every student to write an essay to answer the question: What is your position on robots with artificial intelligence having jobs in the American workforce? To prepare for

your essay, you must determine how you feel about this topic based on all of the information you have read and analyzed, as well as your own experiences.

In a well-developed essay, design and write a claim that clearly answers the question: What is your position on robots and artificial intelligence having jobs in the American workforce? Defend your claim with clear reasons and relevant evidence from the sources you have read, viewed, and analyzed, as well as from your own experience.

Role of Citizens in a Democracy

What are the roles and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy? Martin Luther King Jr., Henry David Thoreau, and the United States government present their views on the voluntary rights, privileges, and mandatory responsibilities of citizens in a democracy. Read Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services website or other civics website, and Henry David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience." Pay attention to the government's and two patriots' views on citizens' rights and responsibilities.

After reading the views of King, Thoreau, and the government, write a detailed essay that presents your position on the roles and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy. Support your position with evidence from the texts you have read. Be sure to acknowledge competing views and give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.

R-rated Movies in High-School Curricula?

In order to enhance the curriculum and bring history, literature, or other studies to life, many teachers obtain approval from their districts to view R-rated movies in their classrooms. Movies such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Glory*, and *Braveheart* are just a few of the films being shown.

Some parents and community groups are opposed to this idea and do not want students being exposed to foul language, extreme violence, and sexual content in school. Others feel that not allowing students to view these approved materials is a form of censorship and can lead to other censoring decisions in the future.

Think about this controversial issue and decide which side of the debate you support. In a well-developed essay, state your position on the issue and convince your readers why your view is correct. Be sure to address any arguments your audience may co

Should School Start Later?

Research has shown that teenagers experience a change in their internal sleep clocks so that waking up early and going to sleep early are difficult. Should high school classes begin later in the day and end later in the day to accommodate students' natural sleep clocks? Consider some of the benefits and

disadvantages to starting school later in the day. Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Should the Legal Driving Age be Changed?

The legal driving age is currently 16 in most states. However, with the increasing number of accidents among teenagers, some people feel that the legal driving age should be changed to at least 18. As a teenager, how do you feel about this issue?

In a persuasive editorial for your school newspaper, write why the legal driving age should either be changed or kept the same. Remember to cite reasons and facts to support your argument.

Steroids in Sports

The entire sports world is under fire over the use and abuse of anabolic steroids and human growth hormones. Amateur and professional sports have become a billion dollar worldwide industry, and for the athletes, the pressure to compete with their peers is enormous. Many popular sports such as baseball, football, tennis, and cycling have been plagued by innuendos of steroid abuse, leaving many of these sports in a state of suspicion and turmoil. This is also the case for many popular Olympic athletes, who have either been caught or suspected of abusing performance-enhancing substances. Over the last two decades, many popular athletes from various sports have either had their records wiped away, or have been suspended after testing positive for illegal performance drugs and hormones. This debate has grown from discussions of who has been taking illegal performance-enhancing substances to whether those who are caught should lose all of their credibility and have a special kind of mark placed on their records.

Do you believe that athletes who have been discovered using illegal steroids or growth hormones should have all of their awards and records taken away, or should they be allowed to keep their records and prove themselves without these performance-enhancing drugs?

In a well-organized essay, articulate your position on this issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument

Teen Curfews

A city council is debating the adoption of a 10 P.M. weekday curfew and a midnight weekend curfew for teenagers. If the curfew is adopted, teenagers on the streets after those hours would be breaking the law. Do curfews keep teenagers out of trouble, or do they unfairly interfere in young people's lives? Take a position on this question. Use reasons and specific examples to support your views.

The Danger of Headphone Use

“Major cities around the world have issued the alarm about cyclists, joggers and walkers wearing iPod or MP3 player headphones and being completely unaware of their surroundings. Runners and walkers have been hit by semi tractor-trailers and trains when they simply did not hear the oncoming vehicles. In one extreme case, a runner was crushed to death by a plane attempting an emergency landing. States should enact laws prohibiting the use of iPod or MP3 players at such volume that ambient noise is completely filtered. If a runner, walker, jogger, or cyclist listening to an iPod or MP3 player with headphones cannot hear an approaching police officer calling to him or her, that person should be fined. This simple law will prevent double-victim tragedies: the victim who suffers severe injury or death, and the victim who is unable to avoid hitting the headphone-wearer and must live with this memory for the rest of his or her life.” – Bill Walker

Discuss Walker’s position and whether you agree or disagree with his analysis of the situation. Be sure to support your position with facts and details from your experiences, observations, or research.

The Impact of Video Games on the Individual and Society

After conducting research about the impact that video games have on individuals and society, you are now presenting your findings to college students as well as a panel of professors at your local community college. They are ready to listen, but you must first allow all audience members to review your final research results in the form of an essay.

Write a well-informed multi-paragraph argumentative essay in which you take a position on whether the impact of video games on individuals and society has been negative or positive. Support your stance using multiple sources to inform your audience. Be sure to address opposing views to create a well-balanced, comprehensive essay.

The Importance of Reading

All of us have heard time and time again from parents and from teachers that reading is important. Why do you think reading is so essential?

Write a multi-paragraph essay explaining why reading books, magazines, newspapers, and other forms of writing is so important. Make sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

The Importance of the Arts in Education

Including art, dance, drama, and music in a student's education is a topic of national debate. Some people believe that these subjects are not a necessary part of a student's education. Others believe that these subjects are not only needed but are vital to a well-rounded education.

Write a persuasive essay explaining whether or not art, dance, drama, and music are an important part of a student's education. Be sure to provide reasons and evidence for your position.

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The Right to Search

Due to recent acts of violence, schools are considering enforcing a random locker and book bag search to ensure students are not bringing in any illegal drugs or weapons. These random searches are intended to make students feel safer, allowing students to focus more on their education than their own well-being.

Write a letter to your principal convincing him or her to agree with your position on this issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Time Capsule

Your school is preparing a time capsule with items that effectively represent the times in which we live. You have been asked to recommend one item to include in the time capsule. What item would you recommend? Why?

Write an essay persuading the time capsule selection committee to include the item you recommend.

Time Spent with Electronic Video Games

Should parents limit the amount of time their children spend on electronic video games? After reading the teacher-provided texts, write an essay that argues your position on parents limiting time on video gaming. Support your position with evidence from the texts. Be sure to acknowledge competing views.

To Frack or Not to Frack

Fracking (hydraulic fracturing) is a process by which natural gas is extracted from rocks below the earth's surface by injecting chemicals and liquids at high pressure. This process makes it possible to obtain valuable natural gas that would otherwise be unobtainable. However, there are adverse environmental consequences which impact residents in areas where fracking is conducted. The costs and benefits of the fracking process are presented in the CNBC video "Oil and Gas: To Frack or Not to Frack," in the NPR All Things Considered program "Drilling Frenzy Fuels Sudden Growth in Small Texas Town," and the YouTube video "Light Your Water On Fire from Gas Drilling, Fracking."

Do the benefits of fracking outweigh the costs? In a well-developed essay, analyze the information presented in the resources above and develop a claim on the costs and benefits of fracking. To support your claim, consider the varied information expressed in the resources. Include specific details from the interviews and videos to support your claim.

Truth and Lies

"Truly, to tell lies is not honorable; but when the truth entails tremendous ruin, to speak dishonorably is pardonable." – Sophocles

Is it always necessary to tell the truth, regardless of the consequences, or are there times when it is permissible to tell a lie? What "rule" should guide a person in determining when to tell the truth or to tell a lie?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you articulate your position on this issue. Be sure to support your position with relevant examples and arguments from your readings or personal experience.

Tyranny of the Majority

... Protection, therefore, against the tyranny of the magistrate is not enough; there needs to be protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling, against the tendency of society to impose, by other means than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them; to fetter the development and, if possible, prevent the formation of any individuality not in harmony with its ways, and compel all characters to fashion themselves upon the model of its own. There is a limit to the legitimate interference of collective opinion with individual independence; and to find that limit, and maintain it against encroachment, is as indispensable to a good condition of human affairs as protection against political despotism... – *On Liberty*, John Stuart Mill

Read the excerpt from John Stuart Mill warning of the tyranny of the majority -- the ability of the majority of the people to control all individuals in a representative democracy. Is majority rule an effective method of government? Should the majority of the people be able to impose their views on all the citizens?

In a persuasive essay, take a position on this issue and defend your position using examples based on your experience and reading.

Was Life in the U.S. Better in 1900 than in 2000?

Life in the United States has changed drastically since 1900, with notable differences in everything from the cost of food to the average life expectancy. Many people refer to those earlier times as "the good old days," believing that life then was simpler than today. Nevertheless, there are many who prefer modern life as we know it in the 2000s.

After reading “America Transformed” and “American Labor in the 20th Century,” argue whether you would prefer living in America in 1900 or 2000. Use facts and details from the text to support your argument.

America Transformed

Although 100 years may not sound like a long time, the past century has brought enormous changes to the United States and the rest of the world.

In 1900, the U.S. population was about one-quarter of its present size, and the country had only 45 states. As you can see from the chart below, the population has grown rapidly since then. The average life expectancy back then was under 50 years. By comparison, men and women today can expect to live over 70 years. One important reason for this is the discovery of antibiotics, or medicines that fight infection. In 1900, pneumonia, diphtheria, and whooping cough killed thousands of people. Thanks to antibiotics, few people die from those diseases today.

U.S. Population 1900 - 2000

<u>Year</u>	<u>Population in millions</u>
1900	76
1920	107
1940	132
1960	180
1980	228
2000	280

About 60 percent of the United States population still lived on farms or in farm towns at the turn of the century, and farming was still the most common occupation, with 11 million farmers. However, more and more people began working in industry, and America had already become the world's leading industrial power. The workforce at the turn of the century did not include wealthy Americans. The ladies in wealthier families were able to comfortably remain at home with their children or were occupied with other interests.

Many inventions that we take for granted today, such as cars and telephones, had just been invented around 1900. It was an exciting time as new inventions made the life of the “common” person much easier. Radio transmissions were introduced, and Crayola crayons were first made (and cost 5 cents a pack). In 1902, the first movie theater opened in Los Angeles. Other inventions, such as computers, televisions, airplanes, and rockets, were just ideas in the minds of science-fiction writers. A century ago, only about 8,000 registered cars were “on the road,” and the total length of all paved roads combined was under 150 miles. For every 1,000 people, there were only about 18 telephones. By comparison, these days many households seem to have at least a dozen phones, counting regular telephone lines and cell phones.

The population of the United States is not the only feature of American life that has risen every year since 1900; the cost of living has also risen. At the turn of the century, 20 cents would buy 100 pounds

of salt, and \$6 bought 100 pounds of sugar. A dozen eggs cost 12 cents, and butter cost 18 cents per pound. Coffee cost 15 cents per pound then, and oranges cost only 20 cents per dozen. All those rates represent a small fraction of today's prices. The average house in 1900 cost \$5,092, which is the equivalent of \$136,873 today. The average car cost \$1,000, which is the equivalent to \$26,880 today.

Between 1900 and 1910, about 9 million immigrants arrived in America dreaming of a new life full of opportunity. A voyage from Italy to America by ship could be purchased for as little as \$12. Costs were low for these newcomers, but so was income. Many new Americans labored in sweatshops for hours every day, six days every week, for as little as \$12.50 per week. By comparison, the minimum wage for workers today is over \$7 per hour! The average wage in 1900 was \$432, which is the equivalent of \$11,612 today.

The past 100 years have transformed the United States into a technological dynamo. Most Americans welcome the changes that have made their country one of the world's greatest super powers, but others complain that progress has come at too high a cost. After such a century of change, though, we can only begin to imagine what the next 100 years will bring.

Excerpted from:
American Labor in the 20th Century
 by Donald M. Fisk

Bureau of Labor Statistics

This article was originally printed in the Fall 2001 issue of Compensation and Working Conditions.
 Originally Posted: January 30, 2003

The 20th century was a remarkable period for the American worker, as wages rose, fringe benefits grew, and working conditions improved. Even though many statistics were sketchy at the beginning of the century, the picture is clear: The American workforce was much better off at the end of the century than it was at the beginning. The statistics used to understand the condition of working Americans also improved over the course of the century, as we discuss in these articles excerpted from the Report on the American Workforce (U.S. Department of Labor, 2001).

Comparison of the American workforce at the end of the 20th century with that at the beginning shows numerous changes. Some of these are dramatic; others less so. Many of these changes are well-known, but some are not. In certain cases, statistical data are lacking to make quantitative comparisons between the beginning and end of the century; but most of the changes are discernible, nevertheless.

The size of the Nation's workforce increased roughly six fold during the 20th century. The workforce registered 24 million in 1900 with those aged 10 and above reporting a gainful occupation; in 1999 it was 139 million (aged 16 and older). But it is not just the sheer numbers that are striking. The composition, compensation, workplace, and very nature of work also changed during the century.

Over the course of the 20th century, the composition of the labor force shifted from industries dominated by primary production occupations, such as farmers and foresters, to those dominated by professional, technical, and service workers. At the turn of the century, about 38 percent of the labor force worked on farms. By the end of the century, that figure was less than 3 percent. Likewise, the percent who worked in goods-producing industries, such as mining, manufacturing, and construction,

decreased from 31 to 19 percent of the workforce. Service industries were the growth sector during the 20th century, jumping from 31 percent of all workers in 1900 to 78 percent in 1999.

The labor force composition shifted in other ways too. Female participation in the labor market grew dramatically in the 20th century. In 1900, only 19 percent of women of working age participated in the labor force, whereas 60 percent of them did in 1999. Furthermore, there was a marked change in female occupational employment. In 1900, only 1 percent of the lawyers and 6 percent of the Nation's physicians were women. In 1999, the figures were 29 percent for lawyers and 24 percent for physicians.

Child labor was common at the turn of the century, and many families needed the income earned by their children to survive. The 1900 census counted 1.75 million individuals aged 10 to 15 who were gainful workers. At that time, these children comprised 6 percent of the labor force. There were no national laws that governed child labor, and while some States enacted and enforced such laws, most did not. By 1999, Federal and State law regulated child labor; and Federal law effectively prohibited full-time workers under the age of 16.

In 1900, per capita income (in 1999 dollars) was \$4,200; it was about \$33,700 in 1999. The average hourly pay of manufacturing production workers in 1999 was \$13.90; in 1909, the first measured year, it was about \$3.80 (in 1999 dollars). In addition to wages and salaries, benefits comprised a major part of employee compensation at the end of the 20th century. Statistics show that benefits averaged \$5.58 per hour—or 27.5 percent of total compensation—in 1999. Benefit data are not available for the beginning of the century, but benefits were minimal—if available at all—to workers in the industrial economy. One compensation series shows that benefits accounted for a little more than 1 percent of total compensation in 1929, the first year measured. Wages and salaries improved during the course of the century, although in real terms they seem to have leveled off during the last quarter of the century. If total compensation—wages, salaries, and benefits—is examined, the trend remains positive. The average workweek changed dramatically during the 20th century. In 1900, the average workweek in manufacturing was 53 hours, and in 1999 it was about 42 hours. But the decline was not steady, as the workweek is very sensitive to business conditions. During the Great Depression, the average number of hours per workweek for production workers in manufacturing dropped as low as 34.6. During World War II, it rose to 45.2 hours at one point. After the War, it stabilized at about 40 hours per week. The normal range for the four decades after World War II was 39 to 41 hours per week, but the factory workweek exceeded 41 hours for most of the 1992–1999 period.

The number of hours at work varies by industry sector, as well as in response to the state of the economy. In 1999, the weekly average for the total private sector was 34.5 hours, and the average for the total goods-producing sector was 41.0 hours. The retail trade sector average workweek was 29 hours, wholesale was 38.3, construction was 39.1, and mining was 43.8. Average retail trade hours, for example, have shown a fairly constant drop since 1947, as industry added more part-time workers. Mining hours, on the other hand, rose over that period. Workweeks in some sectors, such as manufacturing and construction, are impacted by changes in the economy; and many sectors, including retail trade and construction, are affected by seasonal changes.

Unemployment is estimated at 5 percent in 1900; in 1999 it averaged 4.2 percent. While these two figures are not much different, they reflect very different dynamics. Data from four States—California,

Kansas, Maine, and Michigan—and the 1910 census suggest that workers around the turn of the century faced a high probability of being laid off or unemployed sometime during the year. But the length of time one was unemployed was likely to be shorter than it was at the end of the century. In 1999, the median duration of unemployment was 6.4 weeks.

Technological improvements that entered the home in the 20th century led to major changes in the workplace, as more homemakers were able to shift some of their time from home production to paid jobs. At the same time, new industries were created to serve the home, and existing industries expanded. Electricity was in less than 10 percent of the Nation's homes at the turn of the century, but it was almost universal by the end of the century. New machines introduced in the home in the 20th century included the refrigerator, dishwasher, clothes washer, dryer, iron, vacuum cleaner, microwave oven, automatic toaster, electric razor, and electric hairdryer. In addition, there was prepackaged food, frozen food, and a host of other convenience items. The list could extend for many pages. Expansion of the paid workforce was certainly facilitated by these labor-saving goods and devices that were introduced into the home in the 20th century.

Changes in the demographics of the population in the 20th century had a profound impact on the workplace. The population aged, became more diverse, and grew dramatically. In 1900, the life expectancy of a newborn was 47.3 years; in 1999 it was 77.0. In 1900, 80 percent of American children had a working father and a stay-at-home mother, however, by 1999, that figure was only 24 percent. The population at the beginning of the century was 76 million, but approached 280 million by the end of the century. (The official 1999 Census count is 273 million, but the 2000 Census counted 281 million.)

Source:

<http://www.bls.gov/opub/cwc/cm20030124ar02p1.htm> (Bureau of Labor and Statistics)

What is Wisdom?

"It is no longer enough to be smart -- all the technological tools in the world add meaning and value only if they enhance our core values, the deepest part of our heart. Acquiring knowledge is no guarantee of practical, useful application. Wisdom implies a mature integration of appropriate knowledge, a seasoned ability to filter the inessential from the essential."

--Doc Childre and Deborah Rozman

People define wisdom in a variety of ways. How would you define it?

Write a multi-paragraph essay exploring your own conception of what it is that makes a person wise. Be sure to support your interpretation with specific details and examples from your own experiences or readings.

What Makes a Good Coach?

Coaches play an important role in our lives, guiding us as we develop our athletic skills and abilities. Experience tells us that different coaches will have different styles, strengths, and weaknesses. What qualities do you think a good coach should possess?

In a well-developed essay, discuss the qualities that you feel define a good coach. Support your position with well-reasoned arguments or examples from your own experience or reading.

Your Special Skill

Imagine that you have decided to apply for a job. As part of the job application, you have been asked to identify one thing that you do particularly well and to write an essay convincing the employer to hire you based on this special talent.

Write an essay identifying your special skill and convincing the employer to hire you based on your special skill.

Youth and Violence

"Violence among young people is an aspect of their desire to create. They don't know how to use their energy creatively, so they do the opposite and destroy." -Anthony Burgess

In a well-developed essay, articulate your position on the Anthony Burgess

It is a commonly held belief that youth violence is an inevitable reality of the world we live in. A certain amount of youth violence can stem from the exposure to violent acts within the community. In a world where quite often our daily news is punctuated by stories of hate crimes, tragic school shootings, workplace rampages, and attacks on churches and community centers, it is clear that this is a major issue of concern.

What is your opinion on the Burgess quote? What do you think causes young people to act violently? What can be done to curb or eliminate youth violence?

Use the Burgess quote on youth and violence. Include facts, details, and examples to encourage readers to support your position.

Pilot Prompts

An Eye for an Eye (pilot)

Contrapasso, "an eye for an eye," is not just a literary theme, but in some countries around the world, it is the basis of their criminal law. For example, a thief might expect to lose a hand if he or she is caught stealing with it, or someone who takes a human life might expect to give up his or her own in return. Can consequences that mirror the crime be an effective deterrent in modern society?

In a multi-paragraph essay, assert your position on whether "an eye for an eye," the concept of the punishment fitting the crime, can be an effective crime deterrent in modern society. Be sure to provide relevant support for your stance on the issue and address those who may disagree with your point of view.

Analyzing an Argument about Celebrity Testimony in Advertising (pilot)

"Advertisers frequently use the testimony of a celebrity to support a claim: a football star touts a deodorant soap, an actress starts every day with Brand A coffee, a tennis pro gets stamina from Brand X cereal, a talk-show host drives a certain kind of car. The audience is expected to transfer approval of the celebrity to approval of the product. This kind of marketing is misleading and insults the intelligence of the audience. Am I going to buy the newest SUV because an attractive talk-show host gets paid to pretend he drives one? I don't think so. We should boycott this kind of advertising and legislate rules and guidelines for advertisers." —Sue Jozui

In a multi-paragraph persuasive essay, explain the argument that Jozui makes and discuss the ways in which you agree or disagree with her analysis and conclusion. Support your position by providing reasons and examples from your own experience, observations, or reading.

Are Racial Discrimination and Bigotry Eliminated? (pilot)

How far has our society come in terms of eliminating racial discrimination and bigotry? What evidence suggests that we have made progress, and what evidence suggests that we have not?

After reading the teacher-provided texts, write an essay that argues your position on the degree to which discrimination and bigotry exist today. Support your argument with evidence from the texts. Be sure to acknowledge competing views and past or current events to strengthen your argument.

Are Unpaid Internships Fair? (pilot)

For many years, high schools and colleges have encouraged students to gain work experience through internships or apprenticeships. Schools and students alike believed that interning or training with a

company for a few months could lead to more job opportunities after graduation. However, many of the internships offered today are not paid or do not provide a chance to learn or gain new skills. Instead, many interns simply make coffee or take out the trash for their supervisors.

Recently, interns have gained the ability to file lawsuits against their internship companies, demanding pay for their time. As a result, entire industries are faced with a difficult choice: pay their interns minimum wage or cancel their internship program altogether. For some, internships or apprenticeships can mean a chance to obtain important work experience after graduation. Yet, other students cannot afford to work for free and, as a result, cannot get the experience they need. As a student who will one day enter the workforce, either through college or through a trade, you will research this topic and come to your own conclusion about unpaid internships and apprenticeships. You will read a number of sources that provide information about unpaid internships and apprenticeships.

Your high school is considering making unpaid internships or apprenticeships a mandatory requirement during the summer months between your junior and senior year. Your principal wants to hear what her students think of the idea, so she has planned a town meeting where you will present your potential argument to the audience. Your principal has invited parents and guardians, teachers and coaches, and small business owners in the community who would potentially participate in the internship program.

After examining several sources, write a multi-paragraph argumentative letter to your audience at the town meeting that argues either your support or opposition to mandatory unpaid internships and apprenticeships. Make sure you address potential opposing viewpoints in your letter and support your claim with information from the sources you have examined.

Source One:

"Fact Sheet #71: Internship Programs Under The Fair Labor Standards Act"

U.S. Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division

April 2010

This fact sheet provides general information to help determine whether interns must be paid the minimum wage and overtime under the Fair Labor Standards Act for the services that they provide to "for-profit" private sector employers.

Background

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) defines the term "employ" very broadly as including to "suffer or permit to work." Covered and non-exempt individuals who are "suffered or permitted" to work must be compensated under the law for the services they perform for an employer. Internships in the "for-profit" private sector will most often be viewed as employment, unless the test described below relating to trainees is met. Interns in the "for-profit" private sector who qualify as employees rather than trainees typically must be paid at least the minimum wage and overtime compensation for hours worked over forty in a workweek.*

The Test For Unpaid Interns

There are some circumstances under which individuals who participate in "for-profit" private sector internships or training programs may do so without compensation. The Supreme Court has held that the term "suffer or permit to work" cannot be interpreted so as to make a person whose work serves only his or her own interest an employee of another who provides aid or instruction. This may apply to interns who receive training for their own educational benefit if the training meets certain criteria. The determination of whether an internship or training program meets this exclusion depends upon all of the facts and circumstances of each such program.

The following six criteria must be applied when making this determination:

1. The internship, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to training which would be given in an educational environment;
2. The internship experience is for the benefit of the intern;
3. The intern does not displace regular employees, but works under close supervision of existing staff;
4. The employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage from the activities of the intern; and on occasion its operations may actually be impeded;
5. The intern is not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the internship; and
6. The employer and the intern understand that the intern is not entitled to wages for the time spent in the internship.

If all of the factors listed above are met, an employment relationship does not exist under the FLSA, and the Act's minimum wage and overtime provisions do not apply to the intern. This exclusion from the definition of employment is necessarily quite narrow because the FLSA's definition of "employ" is very broad. Some of the most commonly discussed factors for "for-profit" private sector internship programs are considered below.

Similar To An Education Environment And The Primary Beneficiary Of The Activity

In general, the more an internship program is structured around a classroom or academic experience as opposed to the employer's actual operations, the more likely the internship will be viewed as an extension of the individual's educational experience (this often occurs where a college or university exercises oversight over the internship program and provides educational credit). The more the internship provides the individual with skills that can be used in multiple employment settings, as opposed to skills particular to one employer's operation, the more likely the intern would be viewed as receiving training. Under these circumstances the intern does not perform the routine work of the business on a regular and recurring basis, and the business is not dependent upon the work of the intern. On the other hand, if the interns are engaged in the operations of the employer or are performing productive work (for example, filing, performing other clerical work, or assisting customers), then the fact that they may be receiving some benefits in the form of a new skill or improved work habits will not exclude them from the FLSA's minimum wage and overtime requirements because the employer benefits from the interns' work.

Displacement And Supervision Issues

If an employer uses interns as substitutes for regular workers or to augment its existing workforce during specific time periods, these interns should be paid at least the minimum wage and overtime compensation for hours worked over forty in a workweek. If the employer would have hired additional employees or required existing staff to work additional hours had the interns not performed the work, then the interns will be viewed as employees and entitled compensation under the FLSA. Conversely, if the employer is providing job shadowing opportunities that allow an intern to learn certain functions under the close and constant supervision of regular employees, but the intern performs no or minimal work, the activity is more likely to be viewed as a bona fide education experience. On the other hand, if the intern receives the same level of supervision as the employer's regular workforce, this would suggest an employment relationship, rather than training.

Job Entitlement

The internship should be of a fixed duration, established prior to the outset of the internship. Further, unpaid internships generally should not be used by the employer as a trial period for individuals seeking employment at the conclusion of the internship period. If an intern is placed with the employer for a trial period with the expectation that he or she will then be hired on a permanent basis, that individual generally would be considered an employee under the FLSA.

Where to Obtain Additional Information

This publication is for general information and is not to be considered in the same light as official statements of position contained in the regulations.

For additional information, visit our Wage and Hour Division Website: <http://www.wagehour.dol.gov> and/or call our toll-free information and helpline, available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in your time zone, 1-866-4USWAGE (1-866-487-9243).

* The FLSA makes a special exception under certain circumstances for individuals who volunteer to perform services for a state or local government agency and for individuals who volunteer for humanitarian purposes for private non-profit food banks. WHD also recognizes an exception for individuals who volunteer their time, freely and without anticipation of compensation for religious, charitable, civic, or humanitarian purposes to non-profit organizations. Unpaid internships in the public sector and for non-profit charitable organizations, where the intern volunteers without expectation of compensation, are generally permissible. WHD is reviewing the need for additional guidance on internships in the public and non-profit sectors.

Source Two:
"The Good, the Bad, and the Unpaid Internships"
 by Vantage Learning

According to The Boston Globe, over one million students in the US seek an internship every year. Under the illusion that this will provide them with experience for their resume, and maybe even a job at the close of their program, thousands of students apply to a few programs. Many notable companies

have an internship program, including National Public Radio (NPR), National Geographic, and Google, to name a few. These big name companies can certainly afford to be choosy about who is welcomed into their successful inner circle. But what can students hope to gain from the internships that they are actually able to attain?

Not much, reports the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE). In a recent survey by the organization, only 37% of students who accepted an unpaid internship were hired upon graduation. Compare that to a close 35% of students who did not seek out an internship experience at all but were still hired for the same positions. To seal the fate of the unpaid internship, the NACE has also concluded that there is a \$16,000 salary gap between those who took an unpaid internship and those who did not. With fewer opportunities and less wages, it appears that unpaid interns are at a distinct disadvantage.

As a result, some interns are taking matters into their own hands. In 2013, two interns accepted unpaid internships to work on the blockbuster-hit *Black Swan*. According to Eric Spitznagel, a reporter for Bloomberg Businessweek, the interns were made to answer phone calls, deliver coffee, and even take out the trash. The pair eventually sued Fox Searchlight Pictures and were awarded a cash sum retroactively for their work. A similar issue occurred with the famous communications giant Conde Nast, the producer of the publications *Vogue* and *The New Yorker*. After accusations that their interns were being paid less than \$1 an hour, Susan Adams of *Forbes* reports, a lawsuit was filed, and Conde Nast said goodbye to their internship program forever, effectively silencing the entire issue. Yet, this presents only a few cases in thousands in which unpaid interns are given the recognition that they deserve.

Obviously, unpaid internships leave much to be desired for the average student. Yet, could they also be illegal? The answer is, probably. Essentially, if an unpaid internship is offered at a for-profit company it must not displace any workers, and the intern's work must not provide the company with any profit. In most cases, under this definition, unpaid internships for for-profit organizations are certainly toeing the line of legality. Nonprofits, on the other hand, can get away without paying their interns. An intern's work at a charity is classified as "volunteerism," which is perfectly acceptable.

It is possible that students will eventually see the end of unpaid internships. Until then, many students must suffer through internships that will not pay them their worth, or perhaps nothing at all. So, what is to be done? Many are calling for paid internships to be the standard. In the end, if students are able to complete the work, then companies should be able to pay them for it. Period.

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Source Three:
"Unpaid Internships: Not Only Valuable, But Necessary"
 by Vantage Learning

Unpaid internships have become not only the norm but also an expectation of students from employers in many industries. In a difficult economy where a reference can mean the difference between an interview and a rejection letter, unpaid internships can be incredibly valuable. Students are no longer being compared to their peers on grade point averages or extracurricular activities. Rather, it comes down to a basic "yes" or "no" due to the experience of the individual. As a result, the internship experience can represent an important stepping-stone for students. This is because they are receiving an education in business and industry culture that can then be translated into marketable skills in a paid position.

Yet, in many cases, there is more to an unpaid internship than just an education. The critical benefit is that it allows a student to make a decision about the industry that he or she wants to pursue, without the added pressure of performing for a paycheck. A study completed in 2012 by McKinsey and Company found that about half of 4,900 students regretted their career choice. Of course, an internship may not have solved these students' problems, but it may have helped them to realize their disinterest in an area or helped them discover another passion.

Of course, one of the most difficult obstacles students face when pursuing an unpaid internship is money. Some students simply cannot afford to work for free. However, if financial insecurity is an issue, there are alternatives. As Alicia Adamczyk for The Michigan Daily suggests, asking employers to chop down the internship time period, researching and applying to scholarships that will fund your experience, and looking to fulfill internships that are not located in expensive cities, can assist students in saving money in the short-term to gain experience for the long-term.

Another issue for both students and organizations alike is whether an unpaid internship is legal or not. If an internship for a for-profit company does not meet the six criteria outlined by the Department of Wage and Labor, interns will continue to sue their supervising companies. However, if internships are used for the purpose they were designed for (to teach and educate a student in the field of their choice), then there is generally no reason that a company should eliminate their internship program or pay the student. Unfortunately for non-profit organizations, a lack of unpaid interns or volunteers could mean that they are unable to offer their services. Many companies rely on unpaid interns or volunteers to function.

In a less than desirable economy when unemployment rates for 20-24-year-old students hover at about 10%, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, it becomes critical that their skills are being improved and used. The issue is that candidates who may already have enough experience for a manager's position are filling many "entry-level" positions. This largely displaces those with little to no experience. If all internships pay, they will become more competitive, which may leave some students who truly need an internship without one. We need to have options for students so that everyone can have an equal internship opportunity. In the end, unpaid internships are as important a part of a students' education as it is for our economy and society.

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Source Four:

"ODEP WRP 6: Paid Vs. Unpaid Internship"

United States Department of Labor

<http://www.dol.gov/dol/media/webcast/20111206-wrp/20111206-wrp-6-paid-unpaid.htm>

Baby Tourism (pilot)

Included in the range of delicate immigration issues that America faces is a new business sometimes called "Baby Tourism." This industry involves American brokers who, for a fee, supply pregnant women from other countries with the resources they need to come to the United States to give birth. The resources include hotels, doctor appointments, hospitalization, and afterbirth care. Once the babies

are ready, their mothers return to their homelands with children that are United States citizens. As such, these children are then entitled to all the rights given to any American, as written in the 14th Amendment: “All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

Many lawmakers are outraged by this new business and want the 14th Amendment changed to curtail the practices of baby tourism in the country. Others think that, in spite of whatever circumstances bring these women to the United States, their children should be protected under the laws of the land because these children are American citizens and should be treated as such. Do you think the 14th Amendment should be changed or do you think the 14th Amendment should be upheld in light of this new industry?

In a multi-paragraph essay, assert your position on the debate over “Baby Tourism.” After researching the subject using iSEEK , support your stance with facts, statistics, and examples that you find. Address those who may oppose your position and try to persuade your audience to see your point of view.

Business: Resisting the Dress Code (Part 3) (pilot)

Imagine you are an employee at a growing company. Senior management has recently announced a new dress-code policy for the company. There are several provisions of the policy with which you disagree, so you have decided to write a letter to the editor of the company newsletter to express your opinion.

Write a multi-paragraph letter in which you discuss the policy recommendations with which you disagree. Be sure to support your arguments with detailed reasons and examples. Choose your words carefully, as this letter will be read by everyone in the company.

Campaign Finance Reform (pilot)

Campaign finance reform is a current effort in the United States to change and regulate the use of money in political campaigns. Many critics of the current political system believe that politicians who have the ability to raise the most money, gain an unfair advantage by having the ability to gain better exposure and run an overall more effective campaign. Also, there is the belief that a significant portion of this money is given to campaigns by special interest groups who support campaigns in order to have their specific opinion on an issue legislated. In the 2004 Presidential election, over 400 million dollars were spent on advertising by special interest groups with very specific arguments for and against each candidate. The first major attempt to better curb this spending was set in motion in 2002 with the Bipartisan Reform Act. This act was spurred into motion by the campaign finance scandal of 1996 and mainly attempted to curb the amount of money one could give to a national committee by banning the use of union or corporate dollars. In the years since, this act has gotten mixed reactions from both parties and the public. These ideas are hotly contested in every branch of our government, with some

believing that more should be done to stop the flooding of special interest groups and the wealthy into elections, while others find these laws and bills unconstitutional.

Many critics believe that reforming campaigns and regulating the amount of money that a politician can spend will more fairly represent the actual voter who cannot afford to spend a large amount of money to have his opinion heard. Also, it is extremely expensive to run a campaign, which has always been a problem throughout the history of America. For example, Lincoln's 1858 senate campaign bankrupted him and forced him to solicit funds from local businessmen and his law firm. Some feel that if the current system did not exist, there would be an even greater danger of politicians working for special interest groups because there would always be a constant struggle to find money for advertising. Also, the pool of those candidates running would mainly consist of those who are wealthy. There is a fear that those who can not afford to spend millions on campaigns would simply not run, leading to a lack of diversity in those elected to represent America. There is also the basic notion that politicians should not be punished for their success. Since we live in a democratic society, all people, including politicians, have a right to raise as much money as possible, therefore making any attempt to stop funding a breach of their First Amendment rights.

Imagine that your local newspaper has asked you to write an editorial deciding whether or not there should be a limit on how much money presidential candidates can spend and what special interest groups can invest in their political campaign. In a detailed essay, describe whether you agree or disagree with changing the current money use by political campaigns.

Can First Impressions Be Changed? (pilot)

It has been said that first impressions are almost impossible to change. Based on your experiences, do you agree or disagree with this statement? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Cell Phones While Driving (pilot)

Some states have now made it illegal to drive while using a hand-held cell phone. Do you agree or disagree with this law? Why or why not? Take a position on the issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Change the Speed Limit? (pilot)

Public policy makers often make controversial decisions about speed laws, which can bitterly divide the public.

Some people argue that lower speed limits save lives and should be strictly enforced. Opponents insist that raising the speed limit helps relieve traffic congestion and promotes commerce.

After researching the subject using iSEEK, decide which side of the issue you support. Then, using your research and personal experiences, write a persuasive essay arguing for or against changing the speed limit. Include information from your research to support your position.

Change to a Healthier Lunch Menu? (pilot)

Imagine your school cafeteria plans to change to a new, healthier school lunch menu, which would eliminate some of the students' favorite cafeteria foods. Take a position on this issue and write to convince your principal whether this change to the school menu is a good idea or a bad idea. Use specific reasons and examples to support your position.

College Tuition: A Parent's Responsibility? (pilot)

Most parents want to ensure that their children succeed by providing the basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing. However, arguments can arise as to what constitutes basic needs. In recent years, young adults have claimed that their parents should also be held legally responsible for providing the funds for college tuition as one of their basic needs. Should children be allowed to sue their parents for the money to attend college and to cover other expenses that the child deems necessary to succeed?

After reviewing the resources, write a multi-paragraph essay defending your argument for or against a parent's legal responsibility to pay for a child's college tuition. Support your stance with evidence from the resources and be sure to address opposing points of view.

Source One:
"Rachel Canning"
by Vantage Learning

Rachel Canning's bright future was almost compromised in March of 2014. Canning, a cheerleader and a lacrosse player at Morris Catholic High School in New Jersey, wanted to go to college and become a biomedical engineer. Instead, she became known in the media as the high school senior who sued her parents for the money to attend school.

Following several fights between Canning and her parents, she moved out of their house. It is not clear whether she chose to leave or if she was kicked out. What is known is that Canning left two days before her 18th birthday, the day she would become a legal adult (Wright and Izzo). Peggy Wright, a reporter for USA Today, explained that Canning moved in with a friend whose father became her lawyer and paid for her legal expenses.

Before the case was taken to trial, Canning's parents had stopped paying for her Catholic school education and kept her car because they had bought it for her (Wright, "High School Senior Suing Parents for College Tuition"). Canning sued her parents for the money to pay for the bill to the Catholic school she attended, her current living expenses while staying with her friend, and a college fund to pay for her future tuition (Wallace).

Canning's parents were incredibly upset by their daughter's actions. They could not understand why she would not obey their simple rules, such as completing a few chores and making sure to return home for her curfew. However, Canning felt that she had been living in a toxic situation for far too long. She accused her parents of mistreating her, specifically by contributing to an eating disorder that she had developed.

Many people said that Canning was only acting this way because her parents had given her whatever she wanted before the lawsuit. If her parents had tried to set boundaries regarding Canning's lifestyle, the family would not have gone to court. However, Canning felt that she had a right to pursue her high school and college education and that her parents were violating that right by not paying for it.

With all of the evidence presented, it was up to the court in the state of New Jersey to decide. Had Canning left her parents' house on her own terms? If she had, her parents were no longer responsible for her financially. At 18, Canning would be considered an adult in the eyes of the law. However, if it was found that her parents had kicked her out, the judge could rule that Canning's parents were still responsible for her well-being, and he or she could make them pay for their daughter's expenses.

The judge did not side with Rachel Canning. Tara Palmeri and Jeane MacIntosh from the New York Post reported that the judge refused Canning's request, including the demand for her parents to pay her \$600 a week in child support.

Wright, of USA Today, also reported that the government agency Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) investigated Canning's original claims of mistreatment but discovered that they were unfounded. The court set another date. Canning would have to prove that she had been thrown out of the house or had been afraid for her life to overturn the judge's first ruling.

However, this court date never came. A week after the judge ruled in her parents' favor, Canning moved back into their house and dropped the lawsuit. The family began the work to resolve their issues, and Canning decided which college she would attend in the fall. Upon graduating from high school, Canning enrolled in Western New England University and received a \$56,000 scholarship to be distributed over four years.

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Source Two:
"Caitlyn Ricci"
by Vantage Learning

When Maura McGarvey and her ex-husband were sued by their daughter, Caitlyn Ricci, McGarvey took her battle to the Internet. In a blog post called "The Age of Entitlement," McGarvey told her story: she wanted her daughter to obtain a full-time job, complete household chores, respect a curfew, and begin summer classes at a local college or university.

To these requests Ricci responded by moving out. She took her things and went to live with her paternal grandparents. Yet, since Ricci's parents were divorced, this would mean that her father, Michael Ricci, would no longer have to pay child support. McGarvey would be unable to help her daughter pay for her college tuition or her other expenses because there was no secondary income.

McGarvey and her ex-husband started the process to emancipate Ricci. This would mean that she would be considered an adult and would be in charge of paying for herself without their help. However, before her parents were able to do this, Ricci hired a lawyer while living with her grandparents and sued them (Saltzman).

Caitlyn Ricci told a different story. According to Wendy Saltzman of ABC News who reported on the story, Ricci said that she was thrown out of her house in New Jersey by her mother, instead of moving out on her own. She took issue with the fact that she would have to take summer classes, which is when her mother kicked her out.

The matter was settled in August 2013 when a judge ruled that Caitlyn Ricci's parents would have to pay almost \$1,000 in tuition for her classes at Rowan University (Bertsche). Then, in October, Ricci asked for more tuition (\$16,000) for her enrollment at Temple University, and a judge approved this, too. However, this was only a portion of the tuition bill. Ricci accepted that she would have to pay the remaining \$9,000 of a \$25,000 price tag, her lawyer explained to Andy Polhamus of NJ.com.

McGarvey and Michael Ricci want to appeal this decision for many reasons but have been unable to raise the money to do so. Their incomes, along with the fact that they have both remarried and have other children, make it difficult for them to meet their daughter's demand. Secondly, Ricci chose an out-of-state school for her college education. This means that the cost of her tuition is far higher than an in-state school. Finally, she did not apply for loans or scholarships. This means that she could have offset the large bill through other means but instead chose to rely on her parents.

Despite Ricci's parents' extreme sadness that their family has been torn apart by the story, the court is firm. Ricci is able to go to college wherever she wants, and her parents must be the ones to pay for it. Her parents argue that their daughter simply wants money from them, but Ricci is insistent that she wants an equal chance at a great education, just like anyone else.

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Source Three: Parents Paying their Children's Way by Vantage Learning

Most parents are familiar with providing financial assistance to their child. Allowances for completed chores and part-time jobs dominate the better part of many children's lives. Even parents that do not have a relationship with their children may be made to pay an allotted amount every month to maintain their children's well-being. Then, when parents pass away, they may still provide an inheritance to their

families in the form of money or assets. It would seem that parents are continually keeping their children at the forefront of their monetary obligations.

So, why should parents pay for a college education for their child if they are already giving so much? For one, they may want their child to have better opportunities than they had. For most parents and children, this comes in the form of receiving a good education, despite the skyrocketing prices of tuition. Unfortunately, without their parents' help, many young adults are unable to afford an education at all. The National Center for Education Statistics reported that the price of attending a 4-year college or university in 2011-2012 for one student was over \$23,000 a year. According to the United States Social Security Administration, that is almost half of the national average salary of a working adult for that year.

This difficulty in affording college tuition has also resulted in a relatively new phenomenon entitled "emerging adulthood," first put forth by Jeffrey Arnett in the year 2000. Dr. Arnett explained that the period of a child entering into adulthood, age 18 to 25, is when many young adults find themselves and their path (Raphelson). This time is also marked by the fact that many young adults move back in with their parents for a few years. Some parents even assist their children in becoming monetarily independent; Adam Davidson for The New York Times magazine reported that 60 percent of children in the US receive monetary assistance. Interestingly enough, this is not a one-sided relationship. Samantha Raphelson of National Public Radio (NPR) explained that over half of parents agree that living with their "emerging" adults was a positive experience in which they were able to develop a stronger relationship with their child.

At one point, as part of the "American Dream," it was expected that the next generation would surpass their parents in terms of salary. Now, both possibilities have an equal chance: children could become richer than their parents or decidedly poorer. With the price of a college education so high, it is no wonder that young adults look to their parents to support them until they are financially independent; their parents may be the only ones with enough money to help them succeed.

Of course, just because a parent is able or wants to assist his or her child with their finances does not necessarily mean that they should be forced to. For many parents, teaching their children how to achieve financial stability on their own is an invaluable lesson. Some children even share this perspective, as Amy Langfield of CNBC reported that four out of five students worked a part-time job in 2013, amounting to about 19 hours a week, to offset their expenses. In addition, 80% of students are paying for some or all of their educational costs (Langfield).

It seems clear that money and independence are on the minds of many students. Samantha Raphelson of NPR explained that there is a general feeling from young adults that they have failed when they must move back in with their parents after college or are unable to afford their own lifestyle. College tuition debt may become incentive for young adults to free themselves from their parents' influence.

This attitude directly lends itself to a young adult choosing to be emancipated in his or her teenage years to have full control of his or her future. In order to do so in the United States, you must be 16 years of age, living apart from your parents and managing your own money, or it must be decided that being emancipated is in the best interest of everyone involved ("A Teenager's Guide to Emancipation"). All financial obligations are removed from one's parents. With that responsibility

placed on the child, he or she can begin to govern his or her own life and obtain the skills needed to enter the workforce, which is the most valuable part of attaining a college education.

For most parents, their child is their main priority in terms of emotional and financial needs. However, it continues to be unclear what a parent must be responsible for by law and how long they should be responsible for it in terms of their children's education. On one hand, society explains that a college education is the best way for a young adult to become financially independent and obtain a job. Nevertheless, student loan debt can be debilitating to both parents and children alike, even if parents are able to afford the monthly payments. A part-time job can offset the cost of an education and can teach a young adult how to become monetarily responsible, yet this arrangement can become difficult for those whose academic schedules may be too hectic. In the end, it comes down to this simple question: how should a parent provide for their child? Many courts of law do not want to be the ones to decide.

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Source Four:
"Average Estimated Undergraduate Budgets, 2011-2012"
 by My Credit Union

<http://www.mycreditunion.gov/Pages/pocket-cents-cost-of-education-students.aspx>

Source Five:
"Time Use on an Average Weekday for Full-Time University and College Students"
 by United States Bureau of Labor Statistics

<http://www.bls.gov/tus/charts/students.htm>

Committing to a Career at a Young Age (pilot)

In some societies, students are expected to identify a career by the time they enter high school. Their courses of study in high school are selected to guide them toward a specific career. Do you think it is a good idea for students to commit to a career at a young age? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Controversy in Science 101 (pilot)

Many people think of science education as a straightforward, "just the facts" kind of academic endeavor. Yet, there are many controversial topics that are taught in the nation's science classrooms, with the issues of Intelligent Design and Global Warming only two of the most recent examples. Discuss a current science topic that you believe is controversial. How do you think this subject ought to be taught in a high school science classroom? Be sure to support your response position with specific examples from your studies, personal experience, and/or observations.

Credit Cards for Teens (pilot)

“Teenagers have become the target market for many companies, and the Internet has brought the consumers to the products with quick, effortless shopping. It was estimated that teens accounted for \$1.2 billion in Internet spending by 2002. How can unemployed, young consumers be responsible for so much spending? The answer is simple – credit cards. Major credit card companies offer teens the opportunity to receive credit cards with \$200 to \$1,000 limits by simply obtaining a parent’s co-signature. Surveys indicate that parents trust their children to be savvy consumers; however, teens tested on simple finance concepts failed miserably. We are developing a generation of free spending consumers who have no idea how to handle a checking or savings account, budget their money, or save toward future purchases or retirement. Teens under the age of 21 without a full-time job should be required to pass a simple test on finance concepts before credit companies can issue them a credit card. Spending limits on the credit cards should begin at \$200 for the first card, and with each successive year, should be incremented by \$200 if the card-holder has paid bills on time and in full. Those two

measures can make the difference between a future generation of free spending consumers and savvy, finance conscious consumers.” - Jane Dollars

Discuss Dollars’s position and whether you agree or disagree with her analysis of the situation. Be sure to support your position with facts and details from your experiences, observations, or research.

Destination or Journey? (pilot)

Some say that the journey is more important than the destination. They argue that people find more joy and satisfaction in working toward a goal than in achieving it. Others say that it is the destination that gives meaning to the journey. They argue that the process of working toward a goal would be meaningless without its achievement. Take a position on this issue. Use reasons and specific examples to support your ideas.

Discovering Yourself in Service to Others (pilot)

Civil rights leader Mahatma Gandhi wrote, “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” Do you agree or disagree with Gandhi’s statement about the importance of helping others as a way of discovering more about yourself? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Does Inactivity Serve a Purpose? (pilot)

Thomas Jefferson wrote, “Determine never to be idle . . . It is wonderful how much may be done if we are always doing.” Do we accomplish more if we are always doing something, or does inactivity also serve a purpose? Take a position on this question. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Do Students Know Which Teachers Helped Them Learn the Most? (pilot)

Write an essay analyzing how Dr. Arthur Poropat builds his argument that students do not know “what’s good for them (with respect to learning)”. Analyze his use of statistics, facts and examples; reasoning; and persuasive appeal to readers. Do not present your own position on the issue but analyze Dr. Poropat’s support of his argument.

Do We Choose Our Character Traits? (pilot)

The British naturalist and politician John Lubbock wrote, “Your character will be what you yourself choose to make it.” Do we choose our own character traits, or is our character formed by influences beyond our control? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Establishing a Position on the Paris Peace Conference (pilot)

The Prime Minister of your country is attending the Paris Peace Conference. The Prime Minister has asked you, an ambassador, to research the Paris Peace Conference and the Treaty of Versailles to establish a position for him or her to assume at the conference. The peace proceedings and decisions being made are viewed as harsh by some and just by others. Use your research to decide your country's position on the proceedings.

In a detailed report, establish your country's position on the decisions being made at the Paris Peace Conference. Include sufficient facts and details that support the position and inform your Prime Minister.

Federal vs. State Jurisdiction (pilot)

"The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." - The Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution

Currently, the Tenth Amendment ensures that states can enact laws which are not enacted at a Federal level. Since different geographical regions of the United States have different cultures and demographics, it follows that different laws might be more appropriate for different states or regions. Those who oppose state control believe that decisions on a Federal level best protect the rights of all people.

In a detailed essay, articulate whether you believe issues should be legislated on a Federal or state level to ensure protection of all people. Include facts and details to support your argument.

Getting Out the Vote (pilot)

It is election time again for your high school student government. Your principal wants to see a high voter turnout and has appointed you to write an essay for the student newspaper, convincing your peers to vote in the upcoming election.

Write an essay persuading your fellow students to vote in the student government elections. Include a thesis and develop it with sufficient examples and details.

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Government Secrets (pilot)

Most government information is considered classified. The government believes this helps them operate more effectively and in the best interest of the nation's security. Confidential government information might include timelines and strategies for war, government surveillance programs, conversations with other nations, etc. Some people, however, feel that the United States government is too secretive, which can have a negative effect on democracy and civil liberties.

In a detailed essay, articulate your position on whether citizens have the right to know information that is kept confidential by the government, or whether the government has the right to keep information confidential to protect national security. Use facts and examples for support.

Growing by Going Beyond What You Have Mastered (pilot)

Author Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow." Based on your experiences, do you agree or disagree with Emerson's statement? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Impact of Electronic Musical Instruments (pilot)

Throughout history, a person playing an acoustic instrument (wind, string, percussion) has dominated the performance world. In the twentieth century, however, the invention of electronic keyboards and synthesizers has dramatically changed this. Why do you think electronic keyboards and synthesizers threaten the acoustic performer?

Is a Positive Attitude the Key to Success? (pilot)

It has been said that a positive attitude is the key to success in life. Do you agree or disagree with this statement about the importance of attitude? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Is Failure the Worst Thing? (pilot)

It has been said, "Failure is not the worst thing in the world. The very worst is not to try." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Take a position on this issue. Use reasons and specific examples to support your opinion.

Is Fierce Competition Good or Bad? (pilot)

Many people feel that American society is too competitive. Does competition lead to better products and results, or does it lead to a focus on winning at all costs? Is fierce competition a good idea or bad idea? Take a position on the issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Is Honor Inherent or Bestowed? (pilot)

We sometimes describe a person or his/her actions as honorable. What historic figures do we consider honorable? How have they behaved honorably?

In a multi-paragraph essay, define honor and discuss honorable historic figures and their behavior. In your response, include whether you believe honor to be inherent or bestowed. Support your response with facts and details.

Is Photography Art? (pilot)

Is photography art? Why or why not?

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Is Remote Learning Beneficial? (pilot)

Some schools offer distance learning as an option for students to attend classes from home by way of online or video conferencing. Do you think students would benefit from being able to attend classes from home? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Is Technology Dangerous? (pilot)

Is technology dangerous, or does it provide a way to solve our problems? Write a detailed essay in which you develop your position on the issue of technology as dangerous or useful for problem solving. Support your point of view with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations.

Is Year-Round Schooling a Good Idea? (pilot)

Most students enjoy summer vacation, but some educators feel that the summer break is too long and that students do not retain information as easily when they return in the fall. Some people argue that there should be year-round schools, where there would be a 3–4 week break in the summer, a longer

winter break, and a week off in the spring and fall. Does this sound like a good idea to you? Why or why not? Take a position on the issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Limitations of Machines (pilot)

“You insist that there is something a machine cannot do. If you tell me precisely what it is a machine cannot do, then I can always make a machine which will do just that.” –John von Neumann

“One machine can do the work of fifty men. No machine can do the work of one extraordinary man.” –Elbert Hubbard, philosopher, writer (1856-1915)

John von Neumann and Elbert Hubbard present two different notions regarding man and machine. Do you think that machines can be designed to do anything, or are there some things that a machine cannot do?

In a well-developed essay, articulate your position on this issue. Be sure to include details and examples that support your argument.

Maintaining Individuality (pilot)

Author Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.” Do you agree or disagree with Emerson’s statement about individuality? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Margaret Mead's Analysis of Success: Agree or Disagree? (pilot)

"For many Americans, the concept of success is a source of confusion. As a people, we Americans greatly prize success. We are taught to celebrate and admire the one who gets the highest grades, the one voted most attractive or most likely to succeed. But while we often rejoice in the success of people far removed from ourselves-people who work in another profession, live in another community, or are endowed with a talent that we do not especially want for ourselves-we tend to regard the success of people close at hand, within our own small group, as a threat."

-Adapted from Margaret Mead, *The Egalitarian Error*

In a detailed essay, explain Mead's analysis of success, and discuss the extent to which you agree or disagree with her opinion. Be sure to state your own opinion on Mead's analysis, and provide reasons and examples from personal experience, observations, or reading.

Muslim Civilization: Navigation and the Hajj (pilot)

Navigation and sailing were vital skills in the early Muslim world. How might the requirements of the Hajj have helped to develop those skills?

After researching primary documents and other information, write a multi-paragraph essay in which you support your position on the effect of the Hajj on the development of navigation and sailing skills in the Muslim world. Include facts and details to support your argument.

No Presidential Reelection (pilot)

Recently, some observers have speculated as to whether or not one man or woman is both mentally and physically able to run the country for eight straight years. It has been proposed that an amendment to the U.S. Constitution be ratified to extend the term of the President from four years to six years and to remove the opportunity for reelection.

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you persuade your readers to agree with your opinion on this controversial issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Occupations Which Require No Math (pilot)

We all have learning strengths and weaknesses. Those who consider math a weakness would prefer an occupation that does not require math. However, some argue that all occupations require math at some level. Is there an occupation which requires no math?

In a well-developed essay, persuade your math teacher that either all occupations require some math, or that there is an occupation which requires no math whatsoever. Use facts and examples to support your position.

Politicians' Religious Beliefs (pilot)

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." -The First Constitutional Amendment of the United States

The First Amendment of the United States ensures that no law or governmental policy will be created that favors any particular group or system of beliefs, while also securing that no group will be treated unequally due to theirs. In America, a growing number of politicians and lawmakers have begun to openly express their ideology of religious beliefs; some even stating that they use these beliefs to influence legislation that passes their way. While many Americans feel comfortable with these leaders, some have become outraged by these statements, believing it is a direct violation of The First

Amendment. They also fear that if this behavior continues, soon, a time will come when all Americans must conform to the principles of one system of beliefs and choice of lifestyle.

Do you agree with the politicians that cite their faith as a better means to legislate or their critics who view this trend in politics as a serious danger to America's system of equality? In a detailed essay, articulate your position on this issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Proposition 187 (pilot)

Illegal immigration has been one of the more hotly debated issues in American politics. In 1994, California voters passed Proposition 187, eliminating free public education and other public benefits to illegal immigrants.

Though Proposition 187 was eventually defeated due to its unconstitutionality, today, many continue to argue in favor of the basic theme of this proposition. They believe that illegal immigrants and their children deplete the financial and social resources available to Americans, and in turn, damage the overall economy by adding a heavier fiscal burden. Those who support immigrant rights point to the constitution and the overall belief that no individual in need should be turned away.

In a detailed essay, describe whether you agree or disagree with the idea of Proposition 187. Should illegal immigrants be given the same medical and social benefits as American citizens, or should they be forced to find other means to provide for their families? Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Public School Sports for Home-Schooled Students (pilot)

Many school districts do not allow home-schooled students to participate in public school extracurricular activities and sports. Think about the issue of allowing home-schooled students to participate in public school extracurricular activities and sports. Now write to convince your local school administration whether to allow home-schooled students to participate in public school extracurricular activities including sports.

Responding to a Quote by Colin Wilson (pilot)

"The average man is a conformist, accepting miseries and disasters with the stoicism of a cow standing in the rain." -Colin Wilson

What do you think Colin Wilson was trying to say about the average man (or woman)? Do you agree or disagree?

Write a multi-paragraph essay supporting your position on this issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples from your own experiences or readings.

Responding to a Quote by Emerson (pilot)

Carefully read the following quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson's speech, "The American Scholar":

"But genius looks forward: the eyes of man are set in his forehead, not in his hindhead: man hopes: genius creates."

What do you think the speaker was trying to say about the human mind? How does this quote apply to you?

In a well-developed essay, explain what Emerson's statement means to you. Use specific examples from your studies, personal experience, and/or observations to support your interpretation.

Rhetorical Strategies in Kennedy's 1968 Speech (pilot)

Read the speech given by Robert Kennedy in 1968 shortly after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Then, view the video of Kennedy giving the speech before a crowd. How do the effects of the rhetorical strategies differ when reading and viewing the speech?

In a multi-paragraph essay, present an argument on the effects of the rhetorical strategies of ethos, pathos, and logos in Robert Kennedy's 1968 speech. Discuss the difference in impact of those strategies when the speech is read and viewed. Support your argument with evidence from the speech.

Right to Rule in Near East Early Civilizations (pilot)

Over the centuries, dozens of empires ruled the Near East. Why did people think they had the right to rule over others in this region?

After researching primary documents and other information, write a multi-paragraph essay in which you argue why other empires thought they had a right to rule over the people of the Near East. Include facts and details to support your argument.

Rome's Cultural Legacy (pilot)

The many achievements of the Roman Empire are still used in the world today. What are some of the most important and influential Roman legacies?

After researching primary documents and other information, write a multi-paragraph essay in which you argue the most important and influential legacies of the Roman Empire that are still used today. Include facts and details to support your argument.

School Grounds Cleanup (pilot)

Some students at your school expressed an interest in making the school more attractive by getting rid of the trash on the school grounds.

Write a persuasive essay for your school paper in which you convince the readers of the importance of getting rid of the trash and making the school more attractive. Convince your readers through the use of specific reasons and examples.

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Setting Goals (pilot)

Some people say that with dedication, persistence, and time, people can accomplish any goal. Others say that people are limited in what they can accomplish and need to be realistic when setting goals. Take a position on this issue. Use specific reasons and examples to support your ideas.

Should Fine Arts Classes Be Required? (pilot)

Some people believe that students should be required to take a music, a drama, or an art class. Should students be required to take a class in the arts, or should such classes be electives?

Take a position on this issue. Use reasons and specific examples to support your position.

Should School Teams Make Cuts? (pilot)

For many middle and high school students, being part of a sports team can play a major part in their school years. Athletics is not only viewed as a means of getting into shape but also as an area where life lessons can be learned through winning and losing. Currently there is a debate about a common school policy of allowing all students who try out to automatically make the team. This policy is thought to enable all the students involved to have better self-esteem and learn the lessons that competitive sports offer. On the other hand, the school policy of making cuts for a team is thought to provide an important life lesson for young people, to enable players to enjoy more playing time, and to keep athletics budgets reasonable.

Imagine that your school principal is deciding which of the above policies to adopt for your school. Write a persuasive letter to your principal stating your position. Use facts and examples to support your position.

Should Schools Control Student Involvement? (pilot)

Many students become involved in extracurricular activities to enrich their educational experiences, and some even become involved in so many activities that they have little time to study or complete homework assignments. Should schools control student involvement in extracurricular activities, or should the decision regarding extracurricular involvement be left to students and their families? Take a position on the issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Should Students Make Donations to Their Schools? (pilot)

The administrators of your high school have just decided to build a new, state-of-the-art gymnasium and a television production studio, as well as add some new programs. However, to help raise some money for these endeavors, they have decided to ask students and their families to donate money to the school. What is your position on this issue? Do you feel that students and their parents should be obligated to help pay for new school upgrades and programs?

Write a persuasive essay discussing whether you are in favor of or against asking students and their families for monetary donations. Remember to cite reasons and facts to support your argument.

Should Students Use Cell Phones in School? (pilot)

Some schools use cell phones in the classroom for educational purposes. Think about the effects of allowing students to have and use cell phones in classrooms. Take a position on this issue. Use reasons and specific examples to support your opinion.

Success by Failure (pilot)

Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill once said that “success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm.” Do you agree with Churchill’s statement about the important role that failure plays in the pursuit of success? Take a position on this question. Use reasons and specific examples to support your ideas.

Summer Projects (pilot)

Some schools require students to complete summer projects to assure they continue learning during their break. Should these summer projects be teacher-designed or student-designed? Take a position on this question. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Surveillance Cameras and Security (pilot)

Most public places, including schools, have installed video cameras for surveillance. Is the installation of surveillance cameras the best way to provide security, or is it a privacy violation that would not deliver what it promises? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Technical Quality vs. Emotion in Art (pilot)

Which is most important in a work of art, technical quality or emotion? Why?

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Technology Causes Less Human Contact (pilot)

Technology allows people to complete many tasks without having contact with others. People can check out books, shop, and play games without speaking to another person. Has the limitation of human contact due to the use of technology had positive or negative effects on people's lives? Take a position on this question. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Teens in Solitary Confinement (pilot)

Development of a Utopia necessitates isolating individuals who pose danger to citizens and/or the ideals and norms of society. Some of the individuals standing in the way of Utopia are troubled teens, who are often placed in solitary confinement after being thrown in jail. However, critics argue that placing teens in solitary confinement creates additional societal problems by impeding the human interaction necessary for rehabilitation.

Read the teacher-provided articles on teen solitary confinement, and determine your position on this issue. In a detailed essay, defend your position on the use of teen solitary confinement. Use facts and details from your readings to support your position.

The Best Way to Influence Others (pilot)

Philosopher, physician, and humanitarian Albert Schweitzer said, "Example is not the main thing in influencing others; it is the only thing." Is setting a good example by your own behavior the best way to influence other people, or are there better ways to influence others? Take a position on the issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

The Danger in Aiming Too Low (pilot)

The great artist Michelangelo once said, “The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark.” Do you agree or disagree with Michelangelo’s statement? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with details and specific examples.

The Declining Interest in Science Education (pilot)

"Science is an integral part of culture. It's not this foreign thing, done by an arcane priesthood. It's one of the glories of the human intellectual tradition." -- Stephen Jay Gould

We live in an age where scientific advances -- in computers, biotechnology, and nanotechnology to name just a few -- come and go with increasing speed. Yet, some observers maintain that young Americans have lost interest in the study of basic science. Why do you think this is the case?

Write an essay in which you discuss your opinion as to why many students have lost interest in studying science. Be sure to support your position with arguments and reasons drawn from your studies or personal observations.

The Impact of World War II on the Social Position of Mexican Americans (pilot)

Mexican Americans played an important role during World War II by not only joining the US military, but also by filling a need for laborers and agricultural workers. Research the role of Mexican Americans during the WWII era and how their involvement affected their social position in America.

In a detailed essay, argue whether the social position of Mexican Americans improved, declined, or stayed the same as a result of their experiences in America during WWII. Use evidence from your research and prior knowledge to support your argument.

The Importance of Spelling Rules (pilot)

Spelling bees, spelling tests, spell check: for most students, spelling has been a crucial part of language development. Spelling skills are measured on every standardized test, but many argue that with technological advances, spelling is becoming less and less important. Autocorrect and voice recognition software have enabled individuals to communicate quite effectively with little need for spelling skills.

As a result of lowered proficiency in spelling due to students’ overreliance on technology, your local school district is considering adopting a more formal spelling instruction program. They are interested in hearing from students, along with parents and other stakeholders, to determine whether or not there is a need for programmatic spelling instruction. Find articles for and against correct spelling in Wired

(Anne Trubek, “Proper Spelling? It’s Tyme to Let Luce!,” February 2012, and Lee Simmons, “Spelling: A Rebuttal From Wired’s Copydesk, “ February 2012).

As a result of lowered proficiency in spelling due to students’ overreliance on technology, your local school district is considering adopting a more formal spelling instruction program. Before your school board makes a decision, they will read letters from the students, parents, and other stakeholders. Using evidence from the Wired articles, write a letter to the school board in which you argue for or against the importance of spelling rules in a time of increasing technological advances. Include details from your research to support your position.

“The Lottery” (pilot)

After carefully reading Shirley Jackson's short story “The Lottery,” consider the author's message regarding the dangers of conformity. Do you believe that someone can successfully be a member of a larger group or culture and still retain his/her individuality?

In a detailed essay, articulate your position on this issue. Be sure to use specific details and examples from your reading to support your argument.

The Perfect Site for Your Family Reunion (pilot)

Your whole family has agreed to have a family reunion this year. What they cannot agree on is where to meet for the big event. There are so many beautiful places in the world to visit, and your powers of persuasion can perhaps convince your family to travel to the destination of your dreams!

Write a multi-paragraph essay to your family in which you identify a place in the world that would be the perfect setting for your family reunion. Explain, with specific details, what makes this particular place so exceptional. Develop your ideas so that your family members will be persuaded to vote for your chosen destination.

The Power of Fear (pilot)

Many advertisements and political campaigns are designed to exploit the fears of the public. Is fear the most effective way to influence individual and collective behavior?

After reading the teacher-provided texts, write an essay arguing whether or not advertisements and political campaigns use fear to sway the public. Support your argument with evidence from the texts. Be sure to acknowledge competing views and past or current events to strengthen your argument.

The Renaming of Washington Middle School (pilot)

A group of parents has approached the local school board demanding to change the name of Washington Middle School. They argue that George Washington does not embody the American dream.

Write an argumentative response in support of or in opposition to renaming the school. This response will be presented at the next board meeting. Make sure to address potential opposing claims (counterarguments) and to support your claim with effective and credible evidence from the sources you have read and viewed.

The Source of Our Talent (pilot)

"Beyond talent lie all the usual words: discipline, love, luck -- but, most of all, endurance." -- James A. Baldwin

We have all come across very talented people at some point in our lives; these individuals may play sports with great skill, be gifted artists, or possess some other talent that they seem to use with great ease. Do you think that people are born with talent, or do you agree with Baldwin's statement which suggests that talent is actually the result of commitment and hard work?

In a well-organized essay, articulate your position on this issue. Be sure to support your position with arguments and reasons drawn from your readings or personal observations.

The Values and Costs of Naps (pilot)

How much sleep do we need? Do we need different amounts of sleep depending on our age? Is it possible to sleep too much or too little? Can we make up for too little sleep by napping? People of all ages suffer from sleep deprivation sooner or later, so answers to the questions about the amount of sleep necessary to stay healthy are important to us all. Naps are sometimes suggested for making up for lost sleep, but there are opposing views on the value of naps.

Write a multi-paragraph essay about the value or cost of naps, using facts and details from your sources to support your position and to address the opposing point of view.

Source One:
"We All Need Naps"
 by Vantage Learning

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests that adults should get 7-8 hours of sleep each night, but it is hard to find this time. More and more people stay up late, working or watching television. This results in a cycle in which people do not get enough sleep and are sleepy throughout the next day. Naps can help to break this bad habit by providing relief in the middle of the day.

Naps help us to stay more alert and give us key health benefits. For example, they improve memory, focus, and even creativity. According to Rob Stein for The Washington Post, naps lower everything from stress to the risk of heart disease. Naps have also been found to help people with the condition narcolepsy, which causes people to fall asleep suddenly.

Yet, not enough people are getting the sleep or naps they need. This is due to the way in which many people seem to view the idea of naps. Many see them as an example of laziness or lack of work ethic. However, naps can be used to help people recover from lack of sleep. Without a nap, a person may actually seem lazier than if they decided to take a nap.

Additionally, several workplaces have found that napping increases productivity. Even NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) pilots have found that a short nap can help them to keep alert. Employees that do not usually work during the daytime, such as doctors and nurses, benefit from naps, too. Naps can mean the difference between being productive and simply trying to make it through the day.

Many people struggle with their sleeping habits or their health. Naps are an easy solution for a common problem.

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Source Two:
"No Naps"
 by Vantage Learning

It is normal to feel a little tired in the middle of the day. People can feel tired from staying up too late at night or tossing and turning in bed. Others have trouble sleeping due to stress or other conditions. Many people try to fix this problem by napping, yet, it is not a perfect solution. It is important to understand what is causing tiredness in the first place. According to Markham Heid for Time magazine, if the urge to nap is strong every day, a person may have bigger issues with his or her health.

In a study by Medical Daily, nappers were found to have more problems like cancer, heart disease, and diabetes. Their tiredness may have been an early sign for them to seek medical care, which they ignored.

Naps are not only a sign of sickness, but they also make people feel grumpy and tired. This is because some people are better at napping than others. In Heid's article for Time magazine, scientists say that genetics may suggest whether you are a "born-napper" or not. If you are not a napper, and only about 40% of the population is one, naps can be unhelpful. Napping can even make it harder to go to sleep at night, which continues the cycle of sleepiness.

It also may be hard for people to take naps in other places than their beds, making the idea of a nap at work ineffective. Some hospitals are making it easier for their staff to take a quick nap by providing comfortable chairs, but many companies will not allow this. As a result, naps can be distracting to many employees.

The best way to remain healthy and avoid naps is to get a good night's sleep. This way, people can be alert and productive throughout the entire day.

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January 13, 2014

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Three Years to Graduation (pilot)

Some school districts offer programs that allow high school students to graduate in three years instead of the traditional four years. Most students who follow this plan must take courses during the summers or in the evenings or may not be able to take elective courses. Is it a good idea for students to finish high school in three years and enter college or the work force one year early? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and examples.

Tiger Farming: Pro or Con? (pilot)

After reading the article about tiger farming, consider the plight of the Southern Chinese tiger.

Write a detailed essay in which you take a position on the issue of tiger farming. Is it a viable solution to the problems that face the tiger? Why or why not? Be sure to support your position with specific examples and arguments from the article, or your studies and research.

Tiger Farming: Salvation for the Southern Chinese Tiger?

The Southern Chinese tiger is unique because it is considered the "stem" tiger, the subspecies from which all other tigers have evolved. This breed is one of the smallest groups of tigers, with males measuring about 2.5 m (8 ft) from head to tail and weighing approximately 150 kg (330 lb); female tigers are smaller still, measuring about 2.3 m (7.5 ft) long and weighing approximately 110 kilograms (240 pounds). The Southern Chinese tiger's short, broad stripes are spaced farther apart than those of the Bengal or Amur tigers. Southern Chinese tigers hunt primarily between dusk and dawn. In the wild, cooperative hunting among tigers, where couples and families hunt together as does a pride of lions, has been observed; tigers are not the best hunters though, killing only once in every 10-20 attempts. Since it may be several days before a tiger finds its next meal, the environment in which it resides is very critical to its survival.

Thus it has come to pass that the Southern Chinese tiger is one of the world's most critically endangered species. Some experts maintain that there are approximately 20-30 of these tigers left in the wild, but it is more likely that they are already extinct as there have been no confirmed sightings or recorded anecdotes of contact for over 20 years. A total of 47 Southern Chinese tigers exist in captivity in 18 zoos, all of which are in China.

One of the most important contributing factors to the Southern Chinese tigers' dwindling population is the destruction of its prey base. Other critical factors that have contributed to the tiger's decline include population fragmentation and poaching to feed the superstitious belief that tiger bones and organs have regenerative properties. Moreover, in 1959, Chinese leader Mao Zedong declared the tiger and other predators, such as leopards and wolves, to be pests and "enemies of the people." Rural people had already viewed the tiger as a threat to domestic livestock and a vicious man-eater. By the 1950s, they were paid a bounty for each tiger killed. Being so widely persecuted, it is not surprising that that population of the Southern Chinese tiger fell to 200 by 1976. Although the Chinese government reversed its official policy of persecution towards the tiger, banning hunting altogether in 1977, this reversal seems to have been too little, too late. The existing population of captive Southern Chinese tigers is both too small and lacking in genetic diversity to benefit from a repopulation program, so it is extremely likely that the Southern Chinese tiger will become the fourth tiger subspecies to be driven to complete extinction.

In response to the imminent extinction of the Southern Chinese tiger, sanctuaries, zoos, and farms have been established in China and around the world to provide these and other tigers with a safe habitat, protected from threat of poachers and sprawling human populations. Critics argue, however, that many of these farms harbor more sinister agendas. Reports indicate that some of these sanctuaries breed and keep hundreds of tigers and that, in many instances, these tigers are forced to live in crowded, degrading conditions. Furthermore, even though China has banned all international and domestic trade in tiger parts, some of these facilities have skirted poaching laws and are illegally using the farms, zoos, and parks to raise tigers in order to harvest their valuable, black-market body parts. Tiger bone wine and pelts can still be purchased illegally on the black market.

In a move that strikes many observers as contradictory, a new school of conservationists suggests that tiger farming may be a positive development. They claim that legalizing the sale of tiger bones and organs taken from the carcasses of big cats raised on tiger farms is just the kind of radical step needed to save the remaining wild tigers. This new school of conservationism wants to flood the traditional Chinese medicine market with the bones and carcasses of farm-raised tigers, a move that is supported by the owners of the 14 registered tiger farms in China. When such tiger products become available legally, it is argued that prices will fall dramatically, and if prices fall far enough, poachers

will be undersold. When this occurs, there will be little need to kill tigers in the wild because there will be little profit in doing so. With high hopes of China's trade ban being lifted, many tiger habitats are alleged to have begun stockpiling tiger carcasses for the day when the legalized tiger trade is reopened.

There is a growing debate in the international community about whether the world community should take action against these tiger communities. It has been noted that a new school of conservationism holds that the farming of tigers, like the farming of other animals, is a useful method to protect the long-term survivability of the animal while satisfying consumer interest in its parts. Traditional conservationists, on the other hand, claim that, under the guise of protecting tigers, many habitats house tigers in barbaric conditions and will only accelerate the loss of one of the world's most endangered species. They note that, at the biggest tiger farms, busloads of visitors drive through the habitat with groups of tame tigers following behind. In other facilities, tourists pay to watch gangs of tigers shred cows dumped out of passing trucks. Finally, they maintain that the selling of captive tiger parts will only lead to increased poaching by attracting a new market of buyers who would never have thought of purchasing tiger parts before on the black market. Increasing demand, goes the argument, would in turn drive up prices and the incentive to poach wild tigers.

One thing is certain, however; there is little time left for deliberation. Wild populations of tigers around the world are quickly shrinking, and the magnificent creatures that have stirred fear, love, and pity in the human mind for eons, may be on the verge of blinking out for good.

Title IX and Sports Equality (pilot)

Title IX is part of the landmark legislation that banned gender discrimination from schools; it states:

No person in the U.S. shall, on the basis of sex be excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal aid.

This law has had a tremendous impact on the world of high school and college athletics. In the past, schools focused most of their funding and attention on men's athletics, but Title IX demands that schools fund women's programs equally. This has increased the competition for limited school resources and led to some men's sports being abolished. What do you think of this issue?

Write a persuasive essay in which you articulate your position on this law. What do you think is the best way to create an equal playing field for both men and women's sports? Be sure to include specific details to support your argument.

Use of Rote Memorization in Mathematics Instruction (pilot)

Many experts have argued for the elimination of rote memorization as a method for learning mathematical facts such as basic operations and properties. They believe that other instructional practices are more effective. What do you think?

In a well-developed essay, articulate your position on the value of rote memorization of mathematical facts. Be sure to include specific reasons and examples to support your argument.

Using Advice from Experts (pilot)

People who value self-reliance define it as the need for each individual to follow his or her own instincts and ideas. Should people make their own decisions, or should they seek guidance from experts and authorities about life's important matters? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

Visual Art vs. Text to Describe an Event (pilot)

Which is more descriptive, a text that describes an event or a work of visual art? Why?

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Volunteer Programs Required for Graduation (pilot)

Many schools require students to participate in volunteer programs in their communities as a requirement for graduation. However, some people feel that requiring students to volunteer defeats the purpose of volunteering. Do you think students should be required to volunteer in their communities to receive their high school diplomas? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

What is the Definition of Music? (pilot)

Come up with a definition of what you think music is and then develop an argument as to why yours is a complete definition.

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What is the Source of Self-Esteem? (pilot)

Some people believe in praising a student's work to build self-esteem, even if the work is not the student's best effort. They believe that students must be self-confident in order to learn. Others believe that praise given for deficient work undermines learning by lowering standards. They believe that the source of true self-esteem is achievement. Does true self-esteem come from praise or does it come from achievement? Take a position on this issue. Use reasons and specific examples to support your ideas.

Winter Holiday Controversies (pilot)

In recent years, there has been growing debate about whether to replace the word "Christmas" with "Holiday," especially for government-run celebrations and community decorations. For example, to eliminate controversy, authorities are considering changing the name of the annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony to the Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony. What is your opinion on this issue? Should the name be changed?

Write a persuasive letter to local government authorities arguing for or against the name change for celebrations and decorations. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Women in Combat Roles (pilot)

In the last several decades, women have signed up for military service in increasing numbers, and consequently, their service has occasionally brought them into combat situations. Americans disagree on whether they think women should be permitted to serve in military roles that will bring them into dangerous combat situations. What do you think?

In a well-developed essay, defend your position on whether or not you think women should be prevented from serving in combat roles in the US military. Be sure to provide reasons and examples to support your argument.

Work Alone or with a Group? (pilot)

Think about the benefits of working with a group or working alone. Which do you feel is more beneficial? Write to convince your teacher of your preference, either to work with a group or to work alone. Support your position with reasons and specific examples.

Xenotransplantation: Promise or Problem? (pilot)

Due to a worldwide shortage of organs for clinical transplantation, scientists have come to a point where it is reasonable to consider that organs from other species, mostly pigs, could be used as an alternative to human tissues. But great scientific advances always come with a risk; the transplanted tissue may carry unknown latent infections that, once introduced into the recipient, could be activated and give rise to infection. These infectious diseases could be the beginning of a life-threatening pandemic.

Should animal organs be used to replenish this shortage or are the risks to the larger population too great? Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you discuss your position on this controversial issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Xenotransplantation

There is currently a severe shortage of organs to be transplanted into humans. Xenotransplantation, the process of replacing human tissue with that of other species, could be the answer that many scientists have been looking for to alleviate this shortage. In 2005, an average of fifty-four people died per day waiting for an organ transplant. Xenotransplantation has been tested and the evidence suggests that pig organs will be able to replace diseased human tissue in those who need organ transplants as well as in those who have life-threatening illnesses which attack the human tissue system, such as AIDS, diabetes, Parkinson's disease and cancer. This would cause the list of those who are currently waiting for organs, over 70,000 people, to decrease quickly and efficiently and allow those people to enjoy life once again. Xenotransplantation also costs much less than transplanting human organs since pig organs would readily be available. Recent human trials have shown promise in using pig cells for stroke victims and in those suffering from Parkinson's disease.

Unfortunately, there are also dangerous risks involved with animal to human transplantation. The biggest roadblock on the path of Xenotransplantation is the fear that transplanting animal organs into humans could expose them to animal viruses that could not only affect the recipient but could be passed to the general population. These types of viruses are not only those found in the genetic make-up of animals, but rather those that are blood-borne and could easily mutate, causing similar alarm and devastation to humans as with the bird flu.

Another issue raised with Xenotransplantation is whether or not it is ethically or morally right to harvest and kill genetically engineered animals, mostly pigs, and use them for their organs. Before any pig to human transplants can take place, experiments of pig organs to non-human primates must transpire and prove the capability of a three to six month survival rate. Thousands of monkeys, baboons and chimpanzees have been used in tests and killed trying to prove the worthiness of this type of organ transplantation.