

# 60 MINUTES OF DELIBERATION

## LESSON PLAN



# LESSON PLAN: 60 MINUTES OF DELIBERATION



## TEACHER OVERVIEW:

Students will closely examine an issue, develop and express their opinions, listen and respond to the ideas and opinions of others, and consider how high a priority the U.S. government ought to place on the issue being discussed.

## GOAL:

Students will develop critical thinking and communication skills.

## RATIONALE:

This activity is intended to help students build skills and attitudes needed for deliberation. These skills include the ability to consider multiple perspectives, to listen respectfully to peers, and to persuade others. The attitudes include empathy, patience, open-mindedness, willingness to listen and respond, and respect.

## ALIGNMENT WITH COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.B** Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed. (Fosters Constructive Climate)

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C** Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives. (Fosters Constructive Climate, Perspective Taking, and Civic Communication)

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D** Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task. (Curiosity and Perspective Taking)

## ALIGNMENT WITH C3 (COLLEGE, CAREER, AND CIVIC LIFE) FRAMEWORK

**D2.Civ.7.9-12.** Apply civic virtues and democratic principles when working with others. (Fosters Constructive Climate)

**D2.Civ.9.9-12.** Use appropriate deliberative processes in multiple settings. (Civic Communication)

## GOAL:

Students will develop critical thinking and communication skills.

## OBJECTIVES:

Students will

- Identify arguments to support different positions on an issue
- Consider the strength of each argument
- Prioritize the issue being discussed
- Articulate positions while responding to the ideas of others
- Reflect on the quality of participation in the deliberation

## MATERIALS:

Whiteboard or butcher paper, markers, *Current Issues Policy Unit or Monthly Policy Discussion*, sticky notes

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**Tug of Reason<sup>1</sup> .....30 minutes**

*Note: Consider how much or how little scaffolding your students are likely to need to discuss the key question when determining how and when to use this activity. The suggested time above includes time for students to read the material. This activity could be done prior to reading about the issue and then returned to afterwards. Students could add new sticky notes during and after the reading, and could also reassess the strength of various arguments after the reading and structured controversial discussion.*

- Allow students ten minutes to read the background and YES/NO debate for one of the Current Controversies (or assign a policy unit or monthly discussion for reading as homework).
- Explain to students that they will be evaluating the strength of arguments used to support differing points of view on an issue.
- Draw a long line (6-8 feet) on the whiteboard (or on butcher paper).
- Above the line, write a central question from a policy unit or monthly discussion (In policy units, choose one of the Current Controversy questions. For example, in the Economy unit, you could use “Should Congress raise the federal minimum wage?”).
- At one end of the line, write YES and at the other, write NO.
- Tell the students that the line represents a rope and just like in a tug of war, the strongest players (in this case, arguments) will go at the very ends. Their job is to identify arguments to support each position and then to determine how strong those arguments are. Stronger arguments will be placed toward the extreme ends of the rope; weaker arguments will go toward the middle.

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<sup>1</sup> This activity is adapted from a thinking routine called Tug-of-War, explained in the book *Making Thinking Visible* (Jossey-Bass, 2011).

- Ask students to develop arguments to support each position (students can also draw arguments from the YES/NO sections of the text). As each new argument is offered, write it (or ask a student recorder to write it) on a post-it note. Then, ask students how strong that argument is: should the argument be placed near one of the ends of the rope (a strong argument) or toward the middle (a weaker argument)?
- Ask questions about students' reasons for placing arguments where they do. What makes this a strong/weak argument? Is this argument based on facts, values, or something else? How might someone who disagrees with this argument address it?
- After exhausting the list of arguments and placing them along the rope, conduct a think-pair-share to allow students to identify an individual argument (tug) and consider why they agree with its placement: What is one 'tug' that you think is misplaced and why?

### **Prioritize the Issue..... Ten minutes**

- In groups of four to five, ask students to respond to the following prompt

*How high a priority should this issue be for policymakers?*

High => Low

|        |        |           |          |              |             |
|--------|--------|-----------|----------|--------------|-------------|
| Crisis | Urgent | High Need | Moderate | Low Priority | Unnecessary |
|--------|--------|-----------|----------|--------------|-------------|

- Ask each group to share their response and why they prioritized the issue as they did.

### **Deliberation/Debate .....15 minutes**

- Use any deliberation or debate model, such as a fishbowl discussion, Socratic seminar, or faceoff debate, to have the whole class explore the range of views on the issue.

### **Reflect.....Five minutes**

- Think-Pair-Share: During the final discussion, were the strongest arguments the ones that you anticipated would be most powerful during the Tug of Reason? What new arguments emerged? What information would be needed to further this discussion?