

Lesson Blueprints: Debate Lesson

Lesson Title: Four Corners Debate

Grade Level: Middle and High School

Essential Question:

How does a debate help shape our own position on a topic?

Objectives:

Students will....

1. Listen to statements on controversial topics and determine if they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement.
2. Work with group to develop a well-supported argument for their stance.
3. Reconsider their stance on the statement after listening to new information.
4. Reflect on their stances made throughout the class and write a concise paragraph expressing their opinions.

Materials:

- Four posters/signs, each labeled with one of the following: "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree"
- A teacher generated list of statements based on topic being covered in class (incorporating current events is encouraged)
- Paper and pencils for student notes and reflection paragraph

Teacher:

1. Before the lesson, place each poster in a different corner in the classroom. Make sure there is enough space around each poster for students to gather in a group and discuss.
2. Introduce the activity by reading aloud one of the statements below. Ask the students to take a minute to think and determine if they "strongly agree", "agree", "disagree", or "strongly disagree" with the statement.
 - Since many kids need more sleep, school should start two hours later than it does now.
 - The drinking age should be lowered to 18.
 - Cosmetic and beauty companies should be able to test their products on animals.
 - All junk food should be banned from schools.

Note: When using this format with other topics, this is where teacher uses original statements.

3. Direct the students to move to the corner of the room that is labeled with the stance they are taking on the statement. Have them bring a notebook or piece of paper and pencil with them each time they move corners.
4. Give students 2-3 minutes to discuss with the students in their corners the reasons they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree.
5. After small group discussions, ask 1-2 students from each group to share some of the ideas and reasons they discussed in their corner.
6. After every group has had an opportunity to share their thoughts, give students another chance to move corners if their stance has changed based on new information they have heard from their peers.
7. Once students have moved corners if they have changed their minds, have them discuss with their corner groups again and write down a few notes about their final opinion on the statement (for example: I strongly disagree with the [statement] because...). Students should include 1-2 statements to support their position. Continue this same process with statements relevant to topics being covered in class.
8. Your job is to serve as a moderator to keep the discussion flowing from group to group. Intervene and ask probing questions to deepen the discussion when necessary. Encourage students to be respectful with their comments.

Towards the end of the class period, tell students return to their desks. Have them to read over their notes from each statement and choose one statement to develop a deeper argument about. Instruct them to write a concise paragraph stating his or her position on the chosen statement. Their paragraph should include the 4-5 strongest points supporting their position. (This may need to be done for homework if class time runs out.)

Conclusion

Ask the students to reflect on the activity in class today. Did you have a hard time determining your stance on any particular statements? Why or why not? Did your stance change on any of the statements after hearing other's opinions? If so, how? If not, why not? How did the debate help your final written response?

Debate: Four Corners Rubric

Student: _____

	4	3	2	1	
CATEGORY	Exceeds Expectations	Meets Expectations	Approaching Expectations	Below Expectations	Score
Position Statement	The position statement provides a clear, strong statement of the author's position on the topic.	The position statement provides a clear statement of the author's position on the topic.	A position statement is present, but does not make the author's position clear.	There is no position statement.	
Support for Position	Includes 4 or more reasons that support the position statement.	Includes 3 reasons that support the position statement.	Includes 2 reasons that support the position statement.	Includes 1 or no reasons to support the position statement.	
Concluding Sentence	The conclusion is strong and leaves the reader solidly understanding the writer's position.	The conclusion is recognizable.	The conclusion is not clearly stated.	There is no concluding sentence.	
Participation-Verbal Responses	Comments always insightful and constructive; uses appropriate terminology. Comments balanced between general impressions, opinions and specific, thoughtful criticisms or contributions.	Comments mostly insightful and constructive; mostly uses appropriate terminology. Occasionally comments are too general or not relevant to the discussion.	Comments are sometimes constructive, with occasional signs of insight. Student does not use appropriate terminology; comments not always relevant to the discussion.	Comments are uninformative, lacking in appropriate terminology. Heavy reliance on opinion and personal taste, e.g., "I love it", "I hate it", "It's bad" etc.	
Participation-Listening Skills	Student listens attentively when others present materials, perspectives, as indicated by comments that build on others' remarks, i.e., student hears what others say and contributes to the dialogue.	Student is mostly attentive when others present ideas, materials, as indicated by comments that reflect & build on others' remarks. Occasionally needs encouragement or reminder to focus on comment.	Student is often inattentive and needs reminder of focus of class. Occasionally makes disruptive comments while others are speaking.	Does not listen to others; regularly talks while others speak or does not pay attention while others speak; detracts from discussion; sleeps, etc.	
					Total