

# Argumentation Activities

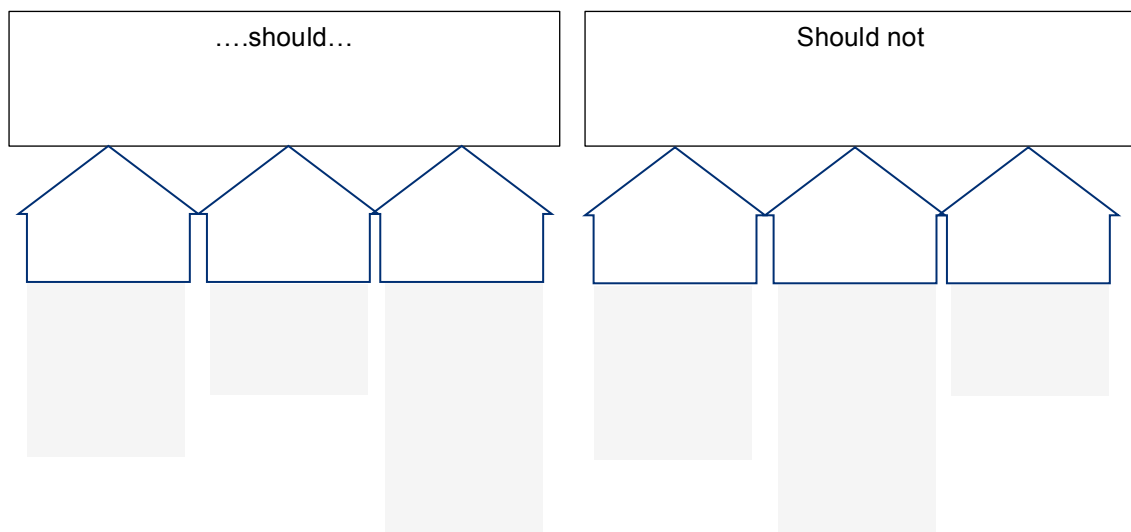
One of the major shifts emphasized by the Common Core Standards is an increased focus on argumentation. The following activities can be used to build students' argumentation skills in preparation for debates, structured academic controversies, discussions, and argument-based written and multimedia products.

## Criteria Bar Graph for Evaluating Criteria

Often, to decide what to do in life, we must use criteria to “weigh” supporting points against each other. Criteria are types of points used to make decisions, such as money, risk, environmental impact, human rights, etc. In this case, the decision to be made is whether or not to... . You can find the points in the texts or on your own, and here you must weigh them to evaluate how much they support a side of the argument.

### Procedure

1. In pairs, partners try to come to an agreement for the three points on each side that most support each side.
2. Students draw a bar below the point to show how strong it is as a point. As they work, they can use sentence starters such as
  - *Yes, but does this point outweigh...*
  - *Perhaps, but they don't cite evidence for...*
  - *The data suggests that...*
3. Pairs prepare to explain to another pair which side is more supported and why they believe that the strongest point most supports that side.



## Conversation Cards

In this pair activity, each student will be either A or B, playing different roles using different information that the other person needs or wants in order to solve a real-world-like problem. In this case, the two roles are a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, who are deciding how to \_\_\_\_\_ on the issue. One of the key aspects of this activity is to *use oral language* (they shouldn't look at the other's card) to bridge the information gap. Students should challenge one another to provide evidence, when appropriate (adapted from Zwiers, 2008).

A:  
- f

B:  
- c

**Sentence Starters** (choose two or three to put on the cards)

- That is an important point, but does it outweigh...
- But in the long run...
- Then again,
- Even though..., we believe that...
- If it requires..., then...
- Why is that important? Which is more important?
- Yet what about the influence of...
- Tell me more about why...
- How does that example support your argument?

### Procedure:

1. Teacher previews key vocabulary on the cards and goes over sentence starters.
2. Students read and try to memorize points and language on the cards.
3. They discuss and respond to points. They can look at the cards, if needed, but not read from them.
4. They debate the issue and come to a conclusion that they would recommend to the president. They can even take into account if it is an election year.

## Survey Grid

The survey grid is a matrix you can use to poll one another on issues. You get to hear similar ideas several times, reinforcing your thinking and vocabulary.

*Survey of Views on Mandatory Service Requirements*

Name	Should ? Why?	Should ? Why?	What would you like to do?
Marlene	Yes. Students	Yes.	
Luis			
Ben			
Total for			
Total against			
Total neutral			

### Procedure

1. To fill in each row, talk to one person (no groups). Put his or her name in the left hand column, and ask the questions on the top. Jot down paraphrased answers in the corresponding boxes.
2. If you hear a key word or version of it (voluntary, impose), write it down and circle it.
3. When most spaces are filled in, read the notes and count up how many are for, against, or neutral in each of the first two columns; write the most popular service types on the third column.
4. Students then write up their conclusions complete sentences. They might start with: *The results of my survey show that the majority of students are against/for .... Reasons include...*
5. As a class, share out some of their findings.

## Opinion Continuum

### Procedure

1. After the teacher models what to do on a sample continuum, get into pairs. One partner (the opinion-giver) closes his or her book. The asker writes in his or her book.
2. The asker asks where the opinion-giver is on the continuum and why. The asker might ask clarifying questions (as a teacher might do).
3. The opinion-giver elaborates and justifies his or her opinion with evidence and/or examples. The opinion-giver student signs his or her name on the continuum at the appropriate point where it matches the level of his or her opinion. Students should not be directly in the middle.
4. After gathering four or more signatures, or when indicated by the teacher, the asker students must put their own name on their continuum and provide elaboration and justification to an opinion-giver.

