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Dialéctica Argumentativa

NATIONAL SPEECH & DEBATE ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL FORENSIC LEAGUE

DEBATE, A MEANS TO WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION

The Core of competitive high school debate is to examine every side of important and controversial issues in an atmosphere of reasoned arguments and respectful discourse. The enormous effort that students put forth to succeed in this intellectually exciting activity is truly inspiring. They work a huge number of hours to research, discussion, case writing, and practicing for competitions. They spend countless evenings and weekends at tournaments competing for their school and teammates. The benefits they accrue as a result of all their hard work are numerous: rigorous and critical thinking, academic skills, mental and emotional maturity and so on.

Many Common Core standards are focused on develop students' speaking and listening skills and students' abilities to support claims with evidence. Debating is a way to address both skills in a fun and engaging way.

ARGUMENTATION AT THE CURRICULUM PLANING

The argument is the core of the Common Core. Education writers such as Mike Schmoker and Deanna Kuhn have made this point, but the authors of the Standards reveal it themselves. To argue is 'the soul of an education,' says the CCSS Research Appendix, because when students are engaged in argument about an issue of importance, 'something far beyond surface knowledge is required: students must think critically and deeply, assess the validity of their own thinking, and anticipate in counterclaims.' College is, they quote Gerald Graff, 'an argument culture'; rigorous college preparation demands first and foremost that students are taught 'argument literacy,'. Therefore, argument must be given 'special' and 'particular' attention and 'emphasis.'

It's amazing the impact of having to debate about the issues with our debater students. Not only do they start to think critically and communicate more clearly in the debates, but we see these skills start to carry over into how the students conduct themselves in their other work in the classes.

Yet despite the endorsement by the Common Core and the growing acceptance of the critical thinking and higher-order literacy skills, debate is still too often a vastly under-utilized strategy in K-12 teaching and learning. To speak plainly: most classroom teachers currently lack both the training, the instructional resources, and the support to effectively implement rigorous structure argumentation activities or debating formats adapted to their curricular content areas.

Argumentation in Language Arts and Social Studies Curriculum

The constituent components of argument-centered instruction are all over the CCSS. The Anchor Standards for reading ask students to 'cite specific textual evidence to support conclusions drawn from the text.' They ask students to 'delineate and evaluate the argument in a text, including the validity of reasoning' and the strength of the 'evidence.' The Anchor Standards for writing require students to 'write arguments to support claims' and to 'draw evidence from texts.' For speaking and listening, students must 'evaluate a speaker's reasoning and use of evidence and rhetoric.'

Argumentation activities are very valuable to teach students how to pick a position, defend it with textual evidence, and cite sources while keeping them engaged. Their analytic argument comparisons are a very effective tool to develop better paragraphs and improve their overall writing.

There is a very strong research basis that supports the claim that argument instruction results in dramatically improved student writing, college-readiness in English and reading (based on ACT benchmarks), and other standardized testing measurements.

Arguments in Mathematics Curriculum

Mathematically proficient students justify their conclusions, communicate them to others, and respond to the arguments of others. Mathematically proficient students can compare the effectiveness of two plausible arguments, distinguish correct reasoning from that which is flawed, and – if there is a flaw in an argument explain what it is.

Moving far beyond mastering a particular calculation technique or building competence with formulas and functions, to be proficient in math, 21st century middle and high school students must be able to 'generate arguments' and 'evaluate arguments.' Students will use empirical, pre-formal, and formal reasoning – all common in a wide range of argument production and practice.

Students who have cultivated a culture of argumentation and debate embrace the following:

It is OK to respectfully critique your classmate's ideas. If your classmate's explanation of how something works differs from your own, it is OK to respectfully raise concerns and challenge assumptions.

It is OK to respectfully defend your own ideas. Students know that if their own ideas are challenged, they can defend those ideas using the evidence and understanding shared by the group.

It is OK to evaluate other people's ideas, and your own. Students who are comfortable with a culture of argumentation know that they need to be constantly evaluating ideas, particularly if new evidence comes to light.

It is OK to change your mind, especially considering new evidence. Students learn that it is OK to change their minds about something and that this is, in fact, a sign of healthy thinking and good knowledge.

When we create a culture of argumentation in our classrooms, we invite our students into a conversation that transcends school walls and bell schedules.

Even states that have rejected the Common Core have retained the prominent place of argumentation in their new Math Standards. Indiana, for example, has in its new Math Standards 'Construct viable arguments,' in which students are required to 'read the arguments of others' and 'improve their arguments' by critiquing their reasoning.

The purpose to give this overview is show how a debater student is working in many Standards in different areas when they are competing at debate tournament.

Arguments in Science Curriculum

The central motivation of scientists and engineers is to put forth what they believe is the best explanation for a natural phenomenon or design solution, and to verify that representation through well-wrought arguments.

The elements of argumentation pervade the scientific process itself, according to progressive understandings of science education. NGSS contains copious reference to argumentative claims, evidence, reasoning, critique (i.e., refutation), and argumentative evaluation; given their embrace of teaching science through scientific argumentation, and their understanding of the correspondence of these argumentation terms with stages in the scientific process (e.g., 'evidence' is the interpretation of a data set that substantiates the most likely conclusion to be drawn by a scientific investigation), these references are no surprise. Corroboratively, the terms 'argument' and 'argumentation' appear more than 100 times in the National Research Council's 2012 Standards, which formed much of the basis of the NGSS.

This is a problem that extends far beyond our students who hope to pursue STEM career paths. This is a problem for any student who hopes to stay healthy, read a magazine article, listen to the news, take care of children or elderly family members, vote, and be part of society of any kind. We hear news every day about the climate, carcinogens, food-borne illnesses, treatments to chronic health problems, innovations in technology... How prepared are we and how informed are our children to participate in these conversations in a meaningful way.

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HOW TO DEVELOP A DEBATE PROGRAM LIKE AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE:

To implement and support a speech and debate program, schools should provide some academics incentives to students to put their best efforts and perseverance in the debate competitions. They would be motivated to give their best not only in debate but also in academic assignments and class participation too.

Most educational Standards, as well as Common Core, require that all students graduate from high school with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in college, career and life. Many of those skills are homed in speech and debate participation.