



SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM

STRATEGY: EVALUATE, TAKE, AND DEFEND A POSITION

Strategy Overview

An important skill for responsible citizens is being able to analyze and consider various points of view before taking a position. Providing students with a structure to organize ideas can be useful for all readers.

Strategy Procedures

1. In the center box (Issue) of the [Take and Defend a Position Handout](#), write the issue about which the class has been learning. It should be an issue that people disagree about or have disagreed about in the past.
2. In the first box on side one, write the name of the person or group of people whose opinions represent one side of the issue. In the first box on side two, write the name of the person or group of people whose opinions represent the other side of the issue.

In the boxes on side one, students record positions supported by the person or people named in the first box of side one. In the boxes on side two, they record the positions supported by the person or people named in the first box of side two.

3. After analyzing the positions listed, students take a position in support of one or the other and write their position in the Take a Position box.
4. In the Defend box, students defend their position in support of the chosen person or group of people.
5. Once the Take and Defend a Position worksheet has been completed, teachers might ask students to defend their positions either orally before the whole class or individually in writing, drawing on the group handout. The following is a checklist of characteristics of an effective defense that can be adapted to assess oral or written presentations. Share these criteria with students before they begin preparing their small-group or individual presentations so that they know how their work will be judged. A check or number rating (1–5) can be used to assess how well the student:
 - clearly states his or her position on the topic;
 - describes the points in support of his or her position, including relevant facts, details, examples, detailed evidence, and reasoning to support arguments;
 - paraphrases and summarizes all perspectives on the topic, as appropriate;
 - maintains a consistent point of view, focus, and organizational structure;

- anticipates readers’ or listeners’ concerns and arguments against the position;
- uses correct grammar and, if written, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Example

We the People: The Citizen & the Constitution, middle school, Lesson 20

1. In the center Issue box, write “Issues divide the original two political parties.”
2. In the first box on side one, write “Federalist Party,” and on side two write “Republican Party.”
3. In the boxes on side one, students record positions supported by the Federalists. In the boxes on side two, they record the positions supported by the Republicans.
4. After analyzing the positions listed, students take a position in support of one or the other party and write their position in the Take a Position box. Students should ask, “Which party’s views does my group support?” or “Is there a middle ground?”
5. In the Defend box, students defend their position in support of the chosen party.

More places to use this strategy

We the People, upper elementary

- Lesson 5: Loyalists vs. Patriots
- Lesson 9: Densely populated states vs. sparsely populated states
- Lesson 10: Northern states vs. southern states
- Lesson 17 (Problem to solve): *Feiner v. New York*
- Lesson 18 (Problem to solve): *Engle v. Vitale*
- Lesson 21: Kids should have the right to vote vs. only adults over 18 should vote

We the People, middle school

- Lesson 13: Densely populated states vs. sparsely populated states\
- Lesson 14: Northern states vs. southern states
- Lesson 18: Federalists vs. anti-federalists
- Lesson 20: Federalist Party vs. Republican Party
- Lesson 23 (Ideas for discussion): *Tinker v. Des Moines*
- Lesson 23 (Solve the problem): *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*
- Lesson 25: Kids should have the right to vote vs. only adults over 18 should vote