

# AARON F. BRATEMAN

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## AGREE TO DISAGREE LESSON PLAN

### Personal Statement and Artistic Philosophy

I started mulling over the idea for this lesson plan following the atrocious first debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump in the run up to the 2020 Presidential Election. Since Trump's inauguration four years ago, truth, facts, and decency have faded from the public discourse as we have watched the President continually embrace a baseless alternate reality. This was on full display during the debate as Trump repeatedly interrupted and talked over Biden, shouted lie after lie, and at his worst, openly enabled white supremacists. On both sides of the aisle, no one could deny that the American people deserved better. Those asking for our vote; to represent us; to lead us should be expected to lay out their vision for the country, to use facts and evidence to justify that vision, and to bring us together as a united people in achieving it. We must demand from those seeking public office that they engage in this high discourse and exchange of ideas. But first we must *know* to demand this, and our children must *know* to demand it, and that they can hold those in power accountable if they fail to deliver. To make this demand, though, our children must understand the democratic process and feel like they have a place in it; that their voices will be heard. Obviously, most of our students do not have the right to vote yet and I think it can be easy for them to feel left out of democracy—to feel like they can sit out. Maybe this is why so many American adults stay out of the political process even when they *can* vote, and maybe it is why it is so easy for politicians to lie to their constituents—because so many never learned how much power they actually had to fight back; to critically examine what they're being told, and to stand up and demand liberation.

Students in this unit plan will explore how those who want to be our leaders can engage in substantive political debate. The unit is designed for 8th graders and combats the potential disengagement in the political process by providing students with the agency to shape the conversation and set the rules for how they believe that process should unfold. To give the students this agency, I harness Vgotsky's Play Theory. In her essay, *Play—A Unique Discipline*, Neva Boyd distinguishes between play and work, explaining that play always involves an artificial situation, while work always involves a genuine one. Vgotsky expands on the use of imaginary situations, writing, "The creation of an imaginary situation is not a fortuitous fact in a child's life, but is rather the first manifestation of the child's emancipation from situational constraints" (99). Through the creation of an imaginary situation, students are able to step away from powerlessness and immerse themselves in a fantasy world where they have the ability to write their own destinies; where they feel like they can exert control.

To create this imaginary situation, I employ a process drama in which students roleplay as political candidates and campaign staffers. Using Dorothy Heathcote's "Mantle of the Expert", the drama asks students to work at the upper end of their *Zone of Proximal Development*. The "Mantle of the Expert" also allows the teacher to easily fill the role of the *More Knowledgeable Other*. The "Mantle of the Expert" website explains, "Inside the fiction the teacher and the students work collaboratively as people working for the same team on the same commission. This means the teacher (inside the fiction) deliberately changes their relationship with the students to one of equal power and authority. In this way decisions are made through discussion and distributed leadership" (How does MoE work?).

As students engage in the political discourse, they will of course envision the world and society that they would like to live in, making direct connections to their real lives. This puts

into action Vgotsky's belief that play and learning are inherently social. I have paid careful attention in crafting the unit to make sure that the play being used is effective for learning. Vgotsky makes clear that play can only be utilized in learning for children who are more developmentally advanced, stating, "Play in an imaginary situation is essentially impossible for a child under three in that it is a novel form of behavior liberating the child from constraints" (96). Since this lesson is designed for eighth graders, this is not an issue. Vgotsky also explains, "...the notion that a child can behave in an imaginary situation without rules is simply inaccurate" (95). Therefore, throughout the drama, I have built in various moments for the group to write rules by collectively establishing criteria that they must adhere to as they act out their roles. Additionally, students are asked to incorporate their previous knowledge of theatrical rules as they perform throughout the lessons. Finally, as suggested by Bodrova and Leong, I continually model different roles that students might step into throughout the unit by using videos and my own performance in "role", effectively presenting students with various entry points for participation in the play.

### Works Cited

- Bodrova, E., & Leong, D. J. (2019). Making Play Smarter, Stronger, and Kinder: Lessons from Tools of the Mind. *American Journal of Play*, 12(1), 37–53.
- Boyd, N. L. (1934). Play—a unique discipline. *Childhood Education*, 10, 414–416.
- How does MoE work? (n.d.). Retrieved December 08, 2020, from <https://www.mantleoftheexpert.com/what-is-moe/how-does-moe-work/>
- Sawyer, R. Keith, et al. *Creativity and Development*, Oxford University Press USA - OSO, 2003. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/nyulibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3422876>.
- Vygotsky, L. S.. *Mind in Society : The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, edited by Michael Cole, and Vera John-Steiner, Harvard University Press, 1980. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/nyulibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3301299>.

**Unit Title:** Agree to Disagree

**Focus of the Unit:** How might candidates for office engage in substantive political debate?

<b>Overarching Unit Objectives</b>	<b>Summative Assessment Strategies</b>
<b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to develop and perform an original character.	<b>Performance Tasks:</b> Debate Night <b>Criteria:</b> Character has clear point of view, Makes strong physical and vocal choices, Clear and connected emotional life, Commits to performance <b>Documentation:</b> Ballot (Appendix H) and Group discussion
<b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to engage in respectful, substantive debate using reputable evidence.	<b>Performance Task:</b> Debate Night <b>Criteria:</b> Articulates clear position on issues, Provides evidence from reputable sources to defend positions, Considers and addresses counterarguments to position, Adheres to debate rules <b>Documentation:</b> Ballot (Appendix H) and Group discussion

**A. Relevant Learning Standards:**

Relevant New York State Standards for the Arts:

TH: Cr2.1.8

- a. Articulate and apply critical analysis, background knowledge, research, and historical and cultural context to the development of original ideas.

TH: Cr3.1.8

- b. Refine physical, vocal, and physiological traits of characters.

Relevant Common Core ELA Learning Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.3

Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

## **B. Context for Learning:**

**Audience:** This lesson is designed for an 8<sup>th</sup> grade middle school social studies, English, or drama class in New York City.

**Known Learning Needs:** Lesson will take place remotely during a global pandemic. As such, students will be engaging with the lesson from home and may require extra prompting, time, or care. Facilitators will pay special attention to engaging students on their territory and meeting their needs at this time.

### **Modifications:**

Learning Disability—Multi-step instructions will be broken down as needed.

Speech and Language Learning Disability—Written agenda, scaffolding, redirection, prompting.

English-Language Learners—Pre-teach key words and phrases through examples; use visual illustrations.

Technology Access—Links will be provided to videos and documents that will allow students to call in or work asynchronously at a later time using a video recording of class.

**Previous Knowledge:** Students have had specific experience in improvisation and character creation, as well as general involvement in theater both on and off stage. They have a working knowledge of American history as well as the electoral process. Students have also had experience assessing the quality of sources they use for evidence, and continue to practice distinguishing reputable sources from irreputable ones.

**Lesson Title:** Runner Up (Lesson 1 of 5)

**Focus Question:** Who might choose to run for public office and why?

Lesson Objectives	Formative Assessment Strategies
<b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to create an original character.	<b>Performance Tasks:</b> Great American Pastime <b>Criteria:</b> Character has clear point of view, Makes strong physical and vocal choices, Clear and connected emotional life, Commits to performance <b>Documentation:</b> Teacher observation, side coaching, and Brief notes (Appendix A)
<b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to describe an original character.	<b>Performance Tasks:</b> Defining Your Candidacy Worksheet (Appendix B) <b>Criteria:</b> Responds to prompts with detailed answers, Responses work together to create cohesive character <b>Documentation:</b> Teacher feedback on worksheet (Appendix B)

**Related Standards:**

Relevant New York State Standards for the Arts:

TH:Cr3.1.8

b. Refine physical, vocal, and physiological traits of characters.

Relevant Common Core ELA Learning Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

**Modifications Relevant to the Lesson:** Multi-step instructions will be broken down and instructions for Great American Pastime will also be provided through the chat to serve as a reminder. Teacher will provide refocusing prompts as needed. For ELL’s, key-terms will be pre-taught and images will be pulled up and shared for unfamiliar vocabulary. Demonstrations of different types of physical and vocal choices will be provided by teacher, and teacher will go over “Defining Your Candidate Worksheet” to make sure language is clear.

**Spatial Organization:** Students should have access to working webcams, stable internet connections, and the ability to have Zoom running concurrently with an internet browser window. A quiet, secluded location will be helpful, though another kind of space will not interfere with participation. Facilitators will walk participants through using Zoom video

settings to turn off non-video participants, switch between gallery and speaker view, navigate into breakout rooms, and view shared screens and spotlighted participants.

**Materials Needed:** Computer, Stable internet connection, Zoom, Biden/Trump Debate Video, “Defining Your Candidacy” Worksheet (Appendix B), Google Docs

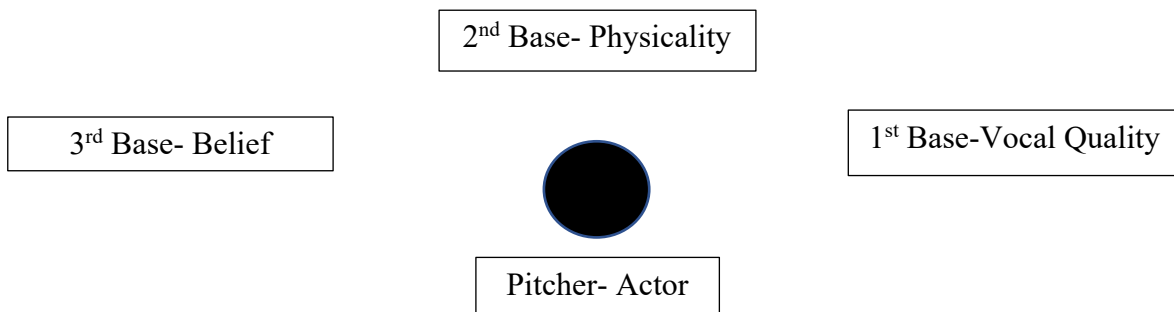
### Procedures

#### 1. Introduction (15 Minutes)

- a. The teacher introduces the unit and explains that students will explore how candidates for office might engage in substantive political debate.
- b. The teacher shares the Biden/Trump Debate Video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wW11Y5jFNcQ>) and students watch part of the debate.
- c. The teacher asks students if they believe this is an example of substantive political debate and leads a discussion with them about what they might change and what substantive debate might look like.
- d. The teacher explains what a process drama is and that students will be participating in one during the unit.
- e. To get started, the teacher explains that students will start by creating a character to use in the drama.

#### 2. Great American Pastime (20 Minutes)

- a. The teacher splits the class up into groups of four which will become different “campaigns” for the rest of the unit. The teacher explains that each group is going to start by creating a candidate to run for office.
- b. The teacher then fields suggestions for which office the candidates will be running for and leads the class through selecting an office.
- c. The teacher explains the exercise by selecting four students, and “positioning” them in the shape of a baseball diamond, with students on “1<sup>st</sup> base, 2<sup>nd</sup> base, 3<sup>rd</sup> base” and the “pitcher’s mound” (though this will be explained just in words on Zoom for everyone to picture.)
- d. The teacher explains how the exercise works and what each role will be required to do, and demonstrates possible choices the students might make, by demonstrating a few vocal qualities, a few physical choices, and a few catchphrases, and reminding students of the ones they explored in the warm up. They also explain how the “pitcher” might try to match what they are seeing the other students do.



- e. The “pitcher” engages with the student on “1<sup>st</sup> base”, and the student on “1<sup>st</sup> base” gives the “pitcher” a vocal quality by demonstrating how they would like the character to sound. The student can do this through either noises alone or gibberish. The “pitcher” matches the vocal quality they are given by repeating what they hear. If the “1<sup>st</sup> base” student feels like the “pitcher” has not matched, they can repeat the vocal quality they made, helping the “pitcher” find the right quality.
  - f. The pitcher then engages with the student on “2<sup>nd</sup> base” keeping the vocal quality they have received by making some noises or speaking in gibberish, and the student on “2<sup>nd</sup> base” gives the “pitcher” a physicality by demonstrating with their own body how they would like the “pitcher” to stand. The “pitcher” tries to match their body to what they see, and if necessary, the “2<sup>nd</sup> base” student can make adjustments/ suggestions to the “pitcher” to help them.
  - g. The “pitcher” then engages with the student on “3<sup>rd</sup> base”, keeping the physicality they have been given and the vocal quality. The “3<sup>rd</sup> base” student then supplies a strong belief, ie. “I think everyone should have equal access to education!” or “We need lower taxes.” This belief can either work with or against the other ideas that have been given to the “pitcher”. The “pitcher” repeats the belief back to the “3<sup>rd</sup> base” student, and any adjustments can be made as needed.
  - h. The other students then turn their cameras off, and the “pitcher”, keeping the vocal quality and physicality and performs a brief monologue as the character that has been created with their video spotlighted. The monologue should start and end with the given belief, and provide insight into the character’s life and point of view.
  - i. The teacher explains that after the monologue is complete, the students “rotate” positions, counter clockwise, and a new candidate is created by the group.
  - j. The teacher sends each campaign into its own breakout room and students in each group engage in the exercise, “rotating” positions until all students have participated in all positions. The teacher moves between breakout rooms, answering questions and side coaching as needed.
- 3. Defining Your Candidate Worksheet (20 Minutes)**
- a. The teacher shares the “Defining Your Candidacy” Worksheet (Appendix B) with the different groups.
  - b. In their groups, students select one of the candidates they created during the previous exercise and complete the “Defining Your Candidate” Worksheet (Appendix B) based on this character.
- 4. Group Discussion (5 Minutes)**
- a. All students return to the main room, and the teacher facilitates a discussion about the process of creating their characters and how they think their character’s background helps define their point of view. The teacher asks students to think about some politicians they know of and how their backgrounds might inform their positions. The teacher asks students to share examples.

**Lesson Title:** Campaign Kickoff (Lesson 2 of 5)

**Focus Question:** How do candidates put their worldview into action?

Lesson Objectives	Formative Assessment Strategies
<b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to perform a monologue as an original character.	<b>Performance Tasks:</b> Campaign Kickoff Speech <b>Criteria:</b> Character has clear point of view, Makes strong physical and vocal choices, Clear and connected emotional life, Commits to performance <b>Documentation:</b> First Poll (Appendix C) and Teacher feedback in discussion
<b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to write a persuasive personal statement.	<b>Performance Tasks:</b> Campaign Kickoff Speech <b>Criteria:</b> Speech has strong point of view, Establishes personal connection through specific details, Substantiates claims with evidence, Meets class established criteria <b>Documentation:</b> First Poll (Appendix C) and Teacher feedback in discussion

**Related Standards:**

Relevant New York State Standards for the Arts:

TH:Cr3.1.8

b. Refine physical, vocal, and physiological traits of characters.

Relevant Common Core ELA Learning Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

**Modifications Relevant to the Lesson:** Multi-step instructions will be broken down and also provided through the chat to serve as a reminder. Teacher will provide refocusing prompts as needed. For ELL's, key-terms will be pre-taught and images will be pulled up and shared for unfamiliar vocabulary.

**Spatial Organization:** Students should have access to working webcams, stable internet connections, and the ability to have Zoom running concurrently with an internet browser window. A quiet, secluded location will be helpful, though another kind of space will not interfere with participation. Facilitators will walk participants through using Zoom video settings to turn off non-video participants, switch between gallery and speaker view, navigate into breakout rooms, and view shared screens and spotlighted participants.



**Materials Needed:** Computer, Stable internet connection, Zoom, Barack Obama 2008 Campaign Kickoff Speech Video, First Poll (Appendix C), Sample Content Articles (Appendix D), Google Docs

### **Procedures**

#### **1. Campaign Kickoff Speech (15 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher explains how they and students will move in and out of “role” during the process drama, answering any questions about the procedure.
- b. The teacher goes into “role” as the Campaign Manager, encouraging students to go into “role” as speechwriters for their campaign. The teacher explains that students will be tasked with writing campaign kickoff speeches for their candidates.
- c. The teacher shares an example video of Barack Obama’s 2008 Campaign Kickoff Speech with the class (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7yP6ALFAw3I>). The teacher asks students to look for elements in the speech that they think make it successful.
- d. The teacher leads a discussion with students about what might make for a good campaign kickoff speech, asking students to reference the example video and define their own criteria for the speeches they will write for their candidates.

#### **2. Speech Writing (30 Minutes)**

- a. In “role”, the teacher explains that students will have some time to write and rehearse a speech for their candidate that they will perform together in “role” as their candidate later in class. The teacher sends students into breakout rooms to work on Google Docs, encouraging them to focus on the criteria the class defined for the speeches.
- b. Students work in groups to write and rehearse their campaign kickoff speeches.

#### **3. Campaign Event (10 Minutes)**

- a. Students return to the main room and shift into “role” as their candidates. Each group performs their speech in “role” while the students in the other groups watch with their cameras off.

#### **4. Group Discussion and First Poll (5 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher and students come out of “role”. The teacher facilitates a discussion about the students’ experience creating, performing, and watching the speeches, and also how they saw each candidate put their worldview into action. Students complete the First Poll (Appendix C).

**Homework:** Students read up on key issues that will be covered at the debate (Appendix D) in order to prepare for the next lesson. The teacher provides a mix of reputable and irreputable sources, asking students to research where the information they are getting is coming from and whether they believe that source is credible or biased.

**Lesson Title:** Focus on the Issues (Lesson 3 of 5)  
**Focus Question:** How do we use evidence to develop positions?

Lesson Objectives	Formative Assessment Strategies
<p><b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to create and perform a political issues ad.</p>	<p><b>Performance Tasks:</b> Political Ad  <b>Criteria:</b> Content is presented in an engaging and creative way, Actors makes strong physical and vocal choices, Actors are committed to performance, Meets class defined criteria  <b>Documentation:</b> Second Poll (Appendix F) and Teacher feedback in discussion</p>
<p><b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to use reputable evidence to form clear positions on political issues.</p>	<p><b>Performance Tasks:</b> Key Issues Worksheet (Appendix E), Political Ad  <b>Criteria:</b> Articulates clear position on political issues, Positions supported by reputable evidence, Meets class defined criteria  <b>Documentation:</b> Teacher feedback on worksheet (Appendix E), Second Poll (Appendix F), Teacher feedback in discussion</p>

**Related Standards:**

Relevant New York State Standards for the Arts:

TH: Cr2.1.8

- a. Articulate and apply critical analysis, background knowledge, research, and historical and cultural context to the development of original ideas.

TH: Cr3.1.8

- b. Refine physical, vocal, and physiological traits of characters.

Relevant Common Core ELA Learning Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

**Modifications Relevant to the Lesson:** Multi-step instructions will be broken down and also provided through the chat to serve as a reminder. Teacher will provide refocusing prompts as needed. For ELL’s, key-terms will be pre-taught and images will be pulled up and shared for unfamiliar vocabulary.

**Spatial Organization:** Students should have access to working webcams, stable internet connections, and the ability to have Zoom running concurrently with an internet browser window. A quiet, secluded location will be helpful, though another kind of space will not interfere with participation. Facilitators will walk participants through using Zoom video settings to turn off non-video participants, switch between gallery and speaker view, navigate into breakout rooms, and view shared screens and spotlighted participants.

**Materials Needed:** Computer, Stable internet connection, Zoom, Political Ad Video, Key Issues Worksheet (Appendix E), Second Poll (Appendix F), *Guide to Debating* (Appendix G), *The West Wing Debate Video*, Google Docs

## Procedures

### 1. Turn on the TV (10 Minutes)

- a. The teacher goes in “role” as the Campaign Manager and thanks the students, who take on the “role” of Campaign Staffers, for reading up on the key issues that will be covered at the debate. The teacher explains that each campaign will need to make a political ad ahead of the debate that touches on the key issues.
- b. The teacher shares an example political ad like: *Every Political Ad Ever* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KmmFQeaY3YM>) or *Biden 2020 Ad* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3UsWMbUpF4>).
- c. The teacher facilitates a discussion in “role” with students about what they saw in the ads and to define criteria for their own ads.

### 2. I Have an Issue with That (15 Minutes)

- a. The teacher explains in “role” that before making their ads, students will need to develop clear stances on the key issues for their candidates. The teacher facilitates the creation of this kind of statement with the whole class using Google Docs.
- b. The teacher then sends students into breakout rooms with their campaigns to create position statements for their candidates on the key issues using the Key Issues Worksheet (Appendix E), reminding students to substantiate any claims they are making with evidence from their readings and to explain why the source they are using is credible.

### 3. Political Ad (20 Minutes)

- a. After students have completed their Key Issues Worksheet (Appendix E), they will create a political ad for their candidate using the criteria defined by the class.

### 4. Commercial Break (10 Minutes)

- a. Students return to the main room and perform their ads for the rest of class while the other students watch with their cameras off.

### 5. Group Discussion (5 Minutes)

- a. The teacher and students come out of “role”. The teacher facilitates a group discussion about the students’ experiences defining their stances on the issues and defining credible sources to use, as well as creating, performing, and watching the political ads. Students complete the Second Poll (Appendix F).

**Homework:** Students read *Guide to Debating*: <https://virtualspeech.com/blog/guide-to-debating> (Appendix G) and watch *The West Wing Debate Video*.

**Lesson Title:** Does the Argument Hold Water? (Lesson 4 of 5)  
**Focus Question:** How do we assess the strength of our arguments?

Lesson Objectives	Formative Assessment Strategies
<b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to refine a character’s point of view.	<b>Performance Tasks:</b> Debate Prep <b>Criteria:</b> Provides justification for point of view <b>Documentation:</b> Peer and teacher feedback in group work
<b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to dramatize character choices.	<b>Performance Tasks:</b> Debate Prep <b>Criteria:</b> Character has clear point of view, Makes strong physical and vocal choices, Clear and connected emotional life, Commits to performance <b>Documentation:</b> Peer and teacher feedback in group work
<b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to refine arguments through critical analysis.	<b>Performance Tasks:</b> Debate Prep <b>Criteria:</b> Considers and addresses counterarguments to position, Provides evidence for conclusions <b>Documentation:</b> Peer and teacher feedback in group work

**Related Standards:**

Relevant New York State Standards for the Arts:

TH: Cr2.1.8

- a. Articulate and apply critical analysis, background knowledge, research, and historical and cultural context to the development of original ideas.

TH: Cr3.1.8

- b. Refine physical, vocal, and physiological traits of characters.

Relevant Common Core ELA Learning Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.3

Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning

and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

**Modifications Relevant to the Lesson:** Multi-step instructions will be broken down and also provided through the chat to serve as a reminder. Teacher will provide refocusing prompts as needed. For ELL's, key-terms will be pre-taught and images will be pulled up and shared for unfamiliar vocabulary.

**Spatial Organization:** Students should have access to working webcams, stable internet connections, and the ability to have Zoom running concurrently with an internet browser window. A quiet, secluded location will be helpful, though another kind of space will not interfere with participation. Facilitators will walk participants through using Zoom video settings to turn off non-video participants, switch between gallery and speaker view, navigate into breakout rooms, and view shared screens and spotlighted participants.

**Materials Needed:** Computer, Stable internet connection, Zoom, Key Issues Worksheet (Appendix E), Google Docs, Jamboard

### Procedures

#### 1. Rules, Regulations, and Respect (15 Minutes)

- a. The teacher goes in “role” as a representative from the Debate Commission, with students in “role” as Campaign Staffers. The teacher explains that each campaign will need to help write the rules for the upcoming debate. The teacher explains how the debate will be structured and how students will participate in the debate. The teacher facilitates a group planning session, using Jamboard, to outline the specifics for how the debate will unfold. The teacher encourages students to draw upon the criteria they laid out after watching the debate clip in the first lesson, their debate reading, and *The West Wing* debate video.

#### 2. Debate Prep (40 Minutes)

- a. The teacher then switches into “role” as the Campaign Manager and explains that each campaign will need to prep their candidate for the debate according to the established rules.
- b. The teacher explains that students will need to come up with possible questions they will be asked during the debate and practice responding to them, with each team working collaboratively to craft the best answers to the questions. The teacher also explains that students should practice responding to rebuttals of their arguments. The teacher asks students to draw upon the video of the debate they watched to help them imagine how they might do this, reminding students they must always substantiate their claims with reputable evidence.
- c. The teacher sends students to breakout rooms and they take turns in their groups practicing and refining their answers for each section of the debate. The teacher moves between breakout rooms, prompting and side coaching as needed.

#### 3. Group Discussion (5 Minutes)

- a. The teacher and students come out of “role” and return to the main room. The teacher facilitates a discussion with students about their debate preparations and the process of assessing their arguments.

**Lesson Title:** Let's Debate (Lesson 5 of 5)

**Focus Question:** How might candidates for office engage in substantive political debate?

Lesson Objectives	Summative Assessment Strategies
<b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to create and develop an original character.	<b>Performance Tasks:</b> Debate Night <b>Criteria:</b> Character has clear point of view, Makes strong physical and vocal choices, Clear and connected emotional life, Commits to performance <b>Documentation:</b> Ballot (Appendix H) and Group discussion
<b>Language-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to engage in respectful, substantive debate using reputable evidence.	<b>Performance Task:</b> Debate Night <b>Criteria:</b> Articulates clear position on issues, Provides evidence from reputable sources to defend positions, Considers and addresses counterarguments to position <b>Documentation:</b> Ballot (Appendix H) and Group discussion

**Related Standards:**

Relevant New York State Standards for the Arts:

TH: Cr2.1.8

- c. Articulate and apply critical analysis, background knowledge, research, and historical and cultural context to the development of original ideas.

TH: Cr3.1.8

- d. Refine physical, vocal, and physiological traits of characters.

Relevant Common Core ELA Learning Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1

Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.3

Delineate a speaker's argument and specific claims, evaluating the soundness of the reasoning and relevance and sufficiency of the evidence and identifying when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

**Modifications Relevant to the Lesson:** Multi-step instructions will be broken down and given through the chat as well to serve as a reminder. Teacher will provide refocusing prompts as

needed. For ELL's, key-terms will be pre-taught and images will be pulled up and shared for unfamiliar vocabulary.

**Spatial Organization:** Students should have access to working webcams, stable internet connections, and the ability to have Zoom running concurrently with an internet browser window. A quiet, secluded location will be helpful, though another kind of space will not interfere with participation. Facilitators will walk participants through using Zoom video settings to turn off non-video participants, switch between gallery and speaker view, navigate into breakout rooms, and view shared screens and spotlighted participants.

**Materials Needed:** Computer, Stable internet connection, Zoom, Ballot (Appendix H), Google Docs

### **Procedures**

#### **1. Welcome (5 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher goes in "role" as the debate moderator and welcomes the students who are in "role" as the candidates to the debate. The teacher reiterates the rules that students had agreed to and explains what will be expected of all participants during the debate.

#### **2. The Debate (40 Minutes)**

- a. The teacher moderates the debate in "role". The debate is broken up into four sections on different key issues. Students from each campaign take turns in each section debating as their respective candidate.

#### **3. Group Discussion (10 Minutes)**

- a. When the debate has concluded, the teacher and students come out of "role". The teacher facilitates a conversation with students out of "role" about their experience debating and watching the debate.

#### **4. Voting (5 Minutes)**

- a. Students vote for the candidate they believe should hold the office by completing their Ballot (Appendix H), making sure to justify their choice. The teacher announces the winner the next day after reviewing the ballots.

**Homework:** Students will write a reflection about their experience working on the unit and articulating what effect the work has had on future participation in the democratic process.

## APPENDIX A

Lesson Objectives	Notes
<b>Drama-Based Objective:</b> Students will be able to create an original character.	



## APPENDIX B

### DEFINING YOUR CANDIDACY

Please respond to the following prompts about your candidate in as much detail as possible.

1. **Name:**
2. **Age:**
3. **Gender:**
4. **What does your candidate look like? Any distinctive features or clothing? An object they are closely associated with? Is their public persona different from their private one?**
5. **Where is your candidate from? Did they always live there? Does being from this place inform their views? If so, how?**
6. **Does your candidate have any family? If yes, who are they? What are they like? Are there other important people in your candidate's life? What are they like? Have these people shaped your candidate's views? If so, how?**

7. **What occupation did your character have before running for this office? Did that experience shape your character's views? If so, how?**
8. **In regards to their personal life, what does your character believe in? What do they love and what do they hate? What are they particularly good at and what are they particularly bad at? Do these views shape their political positions? If so, how?**
9. **Besides perhaps winning the election, what does your character want more than anything else in the world? Why do they want that? Who or what stands in their way of getting it? Does this desire shape their political views? If so, how?**

**10. What else should someone know about your candidate, if anything?**

**11. Please provide an inspirational image of your character below. (This is not necessarily a picture of your character, though it could be, but an image that *feels* like your character):**

## APPENDIX C

### FIRST POLL

- 1. What is your impression of Candidate 1? Did the character have a clear point of view? Did the performers make strong physical and vocal choices, have a clear and connected emotional life, and commit to their performances? How did they meet the campaign kickoff speech criteria?**
  
- 2. What is your impression of Candidate 2? Did the character have a clear point of view? Did the performers make strong physical and vocal choices, have a clear and connected emotional life, and commit to their performances? How did they meet the campaign kickoff speech criteria?**
  
- 3. What is your impression of Candidate 3? Did the character have a clear point of view? Did the performers make strong physical and vocal choices, have a clear and connected emotional life, and commit to their performances? How did they meet the campaign kickoff speech criteria?**

- 4. If the election were held today, which candidate would you vote for and why? How did this candidate meet or exceed our criteria? What next steps could they take to be even stronger? How did the others fall short? What next steps can they take to catch up?**

## **APPENDIX D**

### **SAMPLE CONTENT ARTICLES**

#### Medicare For All

<https://www.healthline.com/health/what-medicare-for-all-would-look-like-in-america#1>

<https://thefederalist.com/2019/09/27/10-reasons-medicare-for-all-is-a-bad-idea-besides-financial-bankruptcy/>

<https://freopp.org/a-fiscal-analysis-of-elizabeth-warrens-health-care-plan-c00519436323>

<https://www.factcheck.org/2019/04/the-facts-on-medicare-for-all/>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/09/us/politics/medicare-for-all-fact-check.html>

## APPENDIX E

### **KEY ISSUES WORKSHEET**

Please craft condensed positions for your candidate for each of the issues below.

#### **1. THE ECONOMY:**

**Please cite the source you used as evidence for your position. Why is this source reliable?**

#### **2. HEALTHCARE:**

**Please cite the source you used as evidence for your position. Why is this source reliable?**

#### **3. COVID-19 PANDEMIC:**

**Please cite the source you used as evidence for your position. Why is this source reliable?**

#### **4. IMMIGRATION:**

**Please cite the source you used as evidence for your position. Why is this source reliable?**





**3. What did you think of Candidate 3's Political Ad? Did the group present the content in an engaging and creative way? Did the performers make strong physical and vocal choices and commit to their performances? Did the ad clearly outline the candidate's position on the issues, and if so, what were those positions? What evidence did the ad provide to back up the positions? Was that evidence from reputable sources? Why or why not?**

**5. If the election were held today, which candidate would you vote for and why? How did this candidate meet or exceed our criteria? What next steps could they take to be even stronger? How did the others fall short? What next steps can they take to catch up?**

## APPENDIX G

# Complete Guide to Debating: How to Improve your Debating Skills

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AUGUST 01, 2018 - [GINI BEQIRI](#) - 15 MIN READ

Debating can look intimidating from the sidelines, with speakers appearing confident, passionate and unwavering, but it consists of skills that anybody can learn. Debating may not be something that you encounter in your everyday work but these skills can be incredibly valuable. In this article we provide a guide to the basics of debating.

## What is debating?

A debate is a structured contest over an issue or policy. There are two sides - one supporting, one opposing.

Benefits of debating include:

- Allowing you to think about aspects and perspectives you may not have considered.
- Encourages you to speak strategically.
- Improving [public speaking skills](#).
- Learning how to create a persuasive argument.
- When you have to argue against your personal view you realise that there are two sides to the argument.

## Debating examples

### **The U.K. Prime Minister, Theresa May, answers questions:**

This example video shows Theresa May answering questions from MPs in the House of Commons. Notice her strong debating skills and how she answers difficult questions under pressure.

Watch the full video here: [Prime Minister's Questions: 16 May 2018](#)

## Debate structure

There are multiple formats a debate can follow, this is a basic debate structure:

- A topic is chosen for each debate - this is called a resolution or motion. It can be a statement, policy or idea. The motion is usually a policy which changes the current state of affairs or a statement which is either truth or false. The motion typically starts with "This House..."
- There are two teams of three speakers:
  - The Affirmative team support the statement
  - The Negative team oppose the statement
- Sometimes you will be asked to take a position in the debate but in other debates you will be allocated your position.
- Teams are provided with time to prepare - usually one hour
- Each speaker presents for a set amount of time
- Speakers alternate between the teams, usually a speaker in the Affirmative team starts, followed by a Negative speaker, then the second Affirmative speaker presents, followed by the second Negative speaker etc.
- The debate is then judged.
- There may be an audience present but they are not involved in the debate

Once you have learned how to debate in one format you can easily switch to another.

[Practice your debating skills in one of our immersive VR courses. Click here to learn more.](#)

## Roles of the speakers

Each speaker must typically do the following:

### First Affirmative

- Contextualise the debate - clearly set out your team's interpretation of the topic and the significant issues they disagree with.
- Provide definitions if necessary.
- Outline the team line and the team split - this is where you outline your team's case and summarise the way your arguments have been divided between your speakers.

- Provide 2-3 arguments supporting the motion.

## First Negative

- Re-contextualise the debate and resolve any definitional issues - if you have disagreements with the definition given by the Affirmative these must be handled immediately. If you want to challenge the definition then you must prove that you have the most appropriate definition. There are three main steps in a definitional challenge:
  1. Clearly state your definition
  2. Provide your arguments as to why this is the superior definition
  3. Rebut the Affirmative's arguments supporting their definition
- Outline a team line and team split.
- Rebut the arguments made by the First Affirmative.
- Deliver 2-3 arguments against the motion.



*Debating is an important skill in many aspects of life, from winning political seats, to negotiating new contracts, to personal development.*

## Second Affirmative

- If needed, resolve any definitional issues.
- Rebut the First Negative's arguments.
- Deliver 2-3 arguments supporting the motion.

## Second Negative

- If needed, resolve any definitional issues.
- Rebut the arguments made by the Affirmative team up to this point, with a focus on the Second Affirmative's arguments.
- Deliver 2-3 arguments against the motion.

## Third Affirmative

- Rebut specific issues raised by Second Negative and defend any other important attacks on your team's case.
- Conclude your speech with a brief summary (1-2 minutes) of your team's case. You should include the key issues which you and the Negative team disagreed on during this.
- You can introduce new material but this is interpreted as poor team planning.

## Third Negative

- This is the same structure as the Third Affirmative.

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There are many variations of the three against three debate, a commonly known one is Points of Information. This is used a lot in [university debates](#). During a speech the opposition is allowed to ask a question or make a point.

They stand up and say "point of information" or "on that point" etc. The speaker can choose to accept or reject the point. If accepted, the point of information can last around 15 seconds and the speaker can ask for it to stop at any time.

## Debate definitions

Younger debaters tend to waste time defining terms so you must first decide whether you need to define a term. Ask yourself: will my speech be confusing if I don't define this term? Could the opposition misinterpret what I mean without a definition? For example, the motion could be "we should ban plastic straws". It's clear what "plastic straws" are but what does "ban" mean?

**Two factors which determine the definition of the debate:**

**1. Context** - what is happening in the area that relates to this issue? For example, maybe the government of a country is debating banning smoking in public buildings and you decide to define the term "passive smoking" during the debate. If a significant event related to the topic has occurred then it should be the focus of the debate, for instance, a shocking report may have recently been revealed in the media showing the widespread effects of second-hand smoking.

**2. Spirit of the motion** - topics are chosen for a reason so what sort of debate was imagined when the topic was chosen? Looking at the spirit of the motion will ensure that you pick a definition that will produce a well-balanced and important debate.

If the topic is vague then you will have more choice of definitions. You have a duty to pick a clear definition and one that will create a good debate. If not, this may cause a definitional challenge which will ruin the debate and frustrate the judges.

For example, the topic may be "we spend too much money on the stars". Stars can refer to celebrities or astronomy so you need to choose a definition.

1. Look at the context and see if there has been a recent significant event related to either topics - the media is the best place to look.
2. Then apply second test - which definition will lead to the best debate, which will be more interesting and debatable?

If one answer passes both tests then that's your definition. If they tie then either is a good definition.

When providing your definition explain the context used to form the definition. This is important because your understanding of the context may be different from others due to various factors, such as, religion, culture, gender etc.

## Basic argument structure

There are various ways of dividing up cases according to groups of arguments, such as, social/economic/political etc. You could assign each speaker to handle a group.

Place the most important arguments first, for example, "The media has more influence on self-esteem than anybody else. This is true for three reasons. Firstly (most important argument)... Secondly..., Thirdly (least important argument)..."

To structure an argument follow these steps:

1. **Claim** - present your argument in a clear statement. This claim is one reason why you're in favour of/against the motion.

2. **Evidence** - the evidence supporting your claim, such as, statistics, references, quotes, analogies etc.
3. **Impact** - explain the significance of the evidence - how does this support your claim?

## Rebuttal

Arguments are weakest at the evidence stage as it's easy to argue against, for example, the evidence may consist of isolated examples or there may be counter evidence. But it's not a good technique because the opposition can provide more evidence or rebut your criticisms.

It's difficult to rebut claims because they are usually reasonable but if you can attack a claim then that speaker's whole argument falls apart. So if you think a claim is vulnerable then rebut it but you will need a strong explanation to show why it doesn't matter.

*European [human rights debating](#) for sixth form students from across London.*

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There are common flaws you can look for to form a rebuttal:

1. **False dichotomy** - this is where the speaker is trying to falsely divide the debate into two sides even though there are more alternatives than they state. It's likely the speaker is doing this on purpose but in some cases they do not understand the debate.
2. **Assertion** - this is when a speaker presents a statement which isn't actually an argument because there is no reason to believe that the statement is valid. It may just be an assumption. You can point out that there has not been enough examination to prove this validity and then give a reason why the assertion is (probably) not valid.
3. **Morally flawed** - arguments can be morally flawed, for example, "All criminals given a prison sentence should be given the death penalty instead, this will save the country money and space." What has been argued is true but it's clearly morally flawed.
4. **Correlation rather than causation** - a speaker may suggest a link between two events and suggest one led to the other. But the speaker may not explain how one caused the other event which can make an argument invalid.
5. **Failure to deliver promises** - sometimes a speaker might fail to complete a task they promised to deliver. For instance, they may state that they will provide evidence supporting a certain claim but they may lose track of what they have said and not actually do this.



**6. Straw man** - the opposing team introduces an argument and then rebuts it. They may use an extreme example of your proposal or perhaps they were hoping that you would make this argument.

**7. Contradiction** - an argument the other team presents may contradict one of their previous arguments. You must point out that the arguments cannot be true simultaneously and then explain how this reduces their case's credibility.

**8. Compare the conclusion to reality** - think "what would happen if what they (the other team) are suggesting is implemented right now?" This usually shows that it's more complicated than they have suggested and the changes can cause secondary problems.

[Practice your debating skills in one of our immersive VR courses. Click here to learn more.](#)

## Scoring

Judges generally score the speakers looking at this criteria:

1. **Content / Matter** - What the debaters say, their arguments and evidence, the relevance of their arguments.
2. **Style / Manner** - How the debaters speak, including the language and tone used.
3. **Strategy / Method** - The structure of the speech, the clarity and responding to other's arguments.



## Important skills for debating

To meet the judges criteria you will have to develop certain skills, consider the following:

- You points must be relevant to the topic.
- Provide evidence whenever you can and not your personal opinion.
- You must put aside your personal views and remain objective when you debate so your argument remains logical. You can be passionate about a topic but interest can turn into aggression and passion can turn into upset.
- Consider the audience's attention span - make it interesting, for example, don't just present lots of complicated statistics.
- Use rhetoric to persuade - consider using the three pillars of rhetoric:
  - Ethos - the ethical appeal
  - Pathos - the emotional appeal
  - Logos - the logical appeal
- Use notes but keep them brief and well organised. Use a different piece of paper for rebuttals.
- Similar to looking at conclusions to create rebuttals, think comparatively by asking yourself "How does my plan compare to what's happening now/what would happen in the world if the other team won?" You can win the debate if you can make comparative claims about why your arguments matter more than the other team.
- Only tell jokes if you're naturally good at it otherwise this can backfire.
- Flexibility is important because you might get allocated the side of the argument you don't agree with. You'll have to work hard to overcome your views. Also use this insight to think of the potential arguments you might make and then plan for counter arguments.

### Voice

- Speak clearly and concisely.
- You must talk fast enough to have the time to deliver your speech but slow enough so you can be understood.
- Project your voice to the back of the room.
- Incorporate dramatic pauses.
- Emphasise important words and vary your tone appropriately.

### Confidence

- Have a relaxed pose and posture.
- Avoid filler words.
- Know your material.
- Emphasise using gestures and avoid nervous gestures.
- Maintain eye contact with the audience.

## Language

- Keep your language simple to avoid confusion.
- Refer to the opposite side as: "My opponent".
- When making a rebuttal say: "My opponent said..., however..."
- Don't exaggerate - avoid the words "never" or "always" etc.
- Avoid saying that a speaker "is wrong", instead say that "your idea is mistaken".

## What to avoid

- Falsifying, making up or altering evidence.
- Publicly disagreeing with the judges' decision.
- Attacking a speaker rather than an idea.
- Acting aggressively or offensively towards debaters, judges, audience etc.
- Interrupting other debaters as this can suggest that your argument isn't very strong.
- Disagreeing with facts or obvious truths.

## APPENDIX H

### BALLOT

**Which candidate are you voting for and why? How did this candidate's combination of personal attributes and policy positions inform your decision? Did the performers make strong physical and vocal choices, have a clear and connected emotional life, and commit to their performances? Please outline the candidate's stance on the key issues and how they defended those stances. What evidence did they provide to back up their conclusions? Why do you think this person would be the best choice to hold this office? *If you do not provide a complete justification for your vote, your ballot will not be counted.***