

Debates and Socratic Method

Debating helps students grasp many essential critical thinking and presentation skills. Debating can foster: abstract thinking, analytical thinking, citizenship, ethics, etiquette, clarity, cross examination, questioning, point of view, distinguishing fact from opinion, identifying bias, language usage, organization, personal vs. political values, persuasion, public speaking, research, team work and cooperation.

Under debates there are several strategies to employ.

1. Four Corners-

Strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree with topic. A modified version could be a two corner strategy with our 2 most dominates political parties. Hand out a sheet showing the right-wing (conservative views) and the left-wing (liberal views) opinions. Discuss the positions on issues such as taxes, education, defense, and the environment. Present a power point and students decide (without using their notes) which question related to either the Republican Party or the Democratic Party. Then, students start to “vote” with their feet, so to speak, as they went from one corner to the other. Fun is always had by all...students love to move!

2. Three Card Strategy-

Pre debate strategy students use this to research a topic. Also, when the major debate has stopped they can interject their questions or comments without the frequent participants monopolizing the discussion because it limits their sharing. They turn in cards after their turn.

3. Participation Countdown-

Raise hand-1st comment, raise hand with 1 finger pointing up- 2nd comment, raise hand with 2 fingers pointing up-3rd comment. You can't comment until everyone else has commented.

4. Tag Team Strategy-

Each member has a minute to respond after formal debate, tags other team mate's hand who responds in one minute and so on. All members must respond before previous ones can speak again.

5. Role Play-

Students play the roles of cross examiner, judge, etc.-in role-play debate; the students examine the different points of view or perspective related to an issue. Be in their shoes approach.

6. Fishbowl strategy-

Most confident debaters are put center stage for others to observe. The observers can critique the proceeds.

7. Inner Circle/Outer Circle-

This sets up a prewriting strategy and gives the students an opportunity gather facts on an issue being discussed and sets the stage for writing persuasive papers.

8. Think Pair Share-

This strategy allows students to do independent research and share their ideas so that they may have a united front when debating the rest of their classmates.

Most Basic strategy is for or against!

Socratic Method is great to use when a teacher wants to play the Devil's Advocate. The teacher can ask a question to spur students into responding to a question presented. The teacher then can force a student to defend his or her position on an issue. The greatest aspect of the Socratic Method is, generally speaking, there is more than one correct answer. It can be used to clarify meaning, feeling, and consequences, as well as, gradually unfold insight or explore alternative actions. This method can teach students to think for themselves.