

7.8 Position Presentations

This activity introduces intermediate argumentation skills. In the activity, students teach the class about a particular debate position. In the process, they develop critical reading and public speaking skills, in addition to encouraging self-managed learning and accountability.

Time Allotment

Presentations can be given all in one class period or spread throughout the semester.

Objectives

By the end of this activity, students will:

- be introduced to argument structure and logic.
- be able to identify arguments in a text.
- be able to summarize a debate position.

Materials and Preparation

Students should have photocopies of relevant evidence sets for affirmative cases, disadvantages, etc.

Method

Assign students to present a particular position to the class (i.e. an affirmative case, the negative case arguments to an affirmative, a disadvantage, a critique, a counterplan, etc.) Students can choose their presentation topics or you can choose for them. You can have them present in groups or individually.

Explain to students the intent of the activity. Tell them that the class needs to become familiar with a whole range of affirmative and negative arguments while individual students improve their critical reading and public speaking skills. Explain that you have set aside time for student presentations on debate positions. Have a discussion about your expectations about what a good presentation will include. You can take the time to brainstorm with the class about what makes a presentation effective, entertaining and memorable. You can also brainstorm about what kinds of information the group will need to learn about a given position.

When the class understands, give students the evidence they will need to prepare for their presentation. Make sure each student knows what day she will be presenting, and thus when she will need to prepare. Preparation can take place in class, as a homework assignment, or as a combination of both.

Each student should give a 3 minute speech. At a minimum, the speech should explain the main arguments of their position, the major arguments against it, and how it can be used in a debate round. The class should flow the presentation.

This activity can be altered by:

- increasing the time per presentation, or including a cross-examination of the presenter.
- setting aside time for a class discussion of the position, including strategic discussions, etc.
- having students perform original research in preparation for their presentation.
- using this format to discuss research assignments and strategies produced by debaters.