

Weighing an Argument

AN ESL WRITERS' WORKSHOP

Students examine the pros and cons of electing their teachers. Using these pros and cons, they weigh the argument of whether students should elect their teachers or not. They then choose individual topics and apply the same kind of analysis.

Preparation:

Homework to be completed before class:

Photocopy the **Election Vocabulary worksheet** and **Green Party campaign poster**. Have the students do the handout as preparatory homework and make an election poster for the Green Party.

The Green Party poster is optional.

Note: Students are asked to choose one of four candidates, if they choose candidate #1, you might want to question whether the candidate is likely to keep his or her promise.

For class:

Print and photocopy the worksheet titled **Weighing an Argument**. Also, make sure there are sufficient dictionaries available. You may also wish to review the important vocabulary as well.

Introduction:

Note: Do not handout the sheet *Weighing an Argument* yet.

Quickly go over the homework that was assigned the previous class. See above.

Ask students how much they weigh or how much things around them weigh.

Now write the lesson title *Weighing an Argument* on the board. Next draw a set of scales on the board. On one side of the scale, write *pros* and, on the other side, write *cons*.

Now ask students what "pros" means and what "cons" means. If they don't know, tell them pros are the good points and cons are the bad points. This will be better demonstrated by going through the warm up activity.

Activity 1: Write the topic:

Should students elect their teachers on the board?

Ask the students if this is a good idea. Then divide the board into two and write pros on one side and cons on the other side.

Ask the students what the pros of electing teachers would be. You should guide them in their English and even lead them to answers. Next ask the students what the cons are.

Now hand out the sheet *Weighing an Argument*.

Compare what the class wrote with what is on the sheet.

Now discuss the phrases, *on the one hand* and *on the other hand*. Have one student read the paragraph and check that everybody understands the paragraph.

Note: The whole paragraph is written using hypothetical speech, or subjunctive mood (would, might). The reason for this is that *students don't actually elect their teachers in reality*.

Now have students in pairs choose a topic and follow the same procedure.

Tell them to find at least three pros and three cons for their topic. After that, they have to rewrite their pros and cons into a paragraph.

The teacher should wander around the room offering suggestions and advice.

Homework: Choose a second topic and go through the same procedure.



Preparatory Homework:

Do an Election Vocabulary Worksheet

Make a Campaign Poster for an Environmental Political Party.

In Class

Go over the homework.

Weigh the argument of whether students should elect their teachers on the board.

Should students elect their teachers?

Pros:

Teachers would prepare harder.

Teachers would teach interesting classes.

Bad teachers wouldn't get elected.

Cons:

Teachers might not teach important things.

Students might only elect easy teachers.

Some teachers would give every student good grades to be keep the students happy.

Students now choose their own topic and weigh the pros and cons and write a paragraph.

Sample Student Writing:

Weighing an Argument

Topic: Should we wear school uniforms?

Some people argue that students should wear their school uniforms. On the one hand, people would know that my friends and I go to the same school. Also, students wouldn't have to make up mind between these clothes and those clothes. And most of all, students could save money. But on the other hand, students couldn't choose their clothes and wear them. Also, students couldn't express their feelings. And most of all, students couldn't change their clothes every morning.