

The Great Driving Kids to School Debate

Summary

During this lesson, students will debate the pros and cons for each mode of travel, focussing on the benefits and the barriers. Students will be able to identify the reasons why some are driven to school. Using the ideas gathered students can then develop ideas on how they can travel to school via more sustainable means.

See links to Western Australian Curriculum at end of this lesson plan.

Year Level: Years 3 - 10

Teaching and Learning Resource

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Identify barriers associated with transport options to school;
- Work in groups to develop a constructive argument;
- Actively participate in a classroom debate, and;
- Develop ideas to overcome barriers associated with transport options to school.

Preparation

- Write the debate topic on the board “Should children be driven to school?”
- Organise access to computers with internet connection to assist in research for the debate.



Background notes

For many students, being driven to school is the norm and they have not had the opportunity to consider other ways to travel. There are a number of reasons why children may be driven to school including:

- Perceived stranger danger;
- Distance;
- Time constraints;
- Road safety concerns;
- Age of student and
- Lack of access to a bike.

Similarly, there are many reasons why parents want their children to walk and ride to school including:

- Health and fitness;
- Practice road safety skills;
- Getting to know neighbourhood;
- Parking problems at school;
- Environmental concerns and
- Developing independence.

This activity allows children to identify the reasons why some are driven to school through a classroom debate. Classroom debates are an excellent way to develop skills in leadership, interpersonal influence, team building, group problem solving, and oral presentation. This activity is suitable for primary and secondary students. The depth of understanding, preparation and delivery skills expected will vary according to the year levels.

Teaching and learning ideas

Teachers are encouraged to use a range of the teaching and learning ideas provided. The teaching and learning ideas provide opportunities to address multiple learning areas. Teachers can modify and extend ideas for different year levels and phases of schooling. Teaching ideas have been aligned to the Western Australian curriculum including identification of learning area, strand and sub-strand.

Activity 1 – Brainstorm

1. Split the class into small groups and ask each group to brainstorm the question: “Why do parents drive their kids to school?”
2. Groups will need to identify some of the barriers parents face when deciding how their children travel to school. For example, ‘perceived stranger danger’ or ‘road safety concerns’ are common reasons parents drive their children to school.

3. Collate group ideas into a class list of ideas.

Activity 2 – Preparing the debate

1. Explain to the students that they will break into two teams to hold a class debate.
2. Students need to be clear in their understanding of what a debate is. Provide students with examples of professional debates (e.g. Parliamentary) and explain the benefits of debating (effective way to discuss difficult issues, identify evidence for and against arguments, assist decision makers).
3. Brainstorm ideas on how to decide which team is FOR and which team is AGAINST.
4. As a class decide on the best way of allocating topic approach.
5. Divide the class into two teams and assign one team to be FOR and one team to be AGAINST driving children to school.
6. Discuss with your class the expectations for a positive teamwork experience. (e.g. taking turns, respecting the views of others, keeping noise to a minimum)
7. Create a class list of the expected group norms of behaviour.
8. Class create an evaluation matrix for evaluating the debate. Evaluation elements might include some of the following content from primary and secondary English curriculum:
 - Include ability to explore and demonstrate different ways of expressing emotions, including verbal, visual, body language and facial expressions;
 - How language used for different formal and informal social interactions is influenced by the purpose and audience- was the language used appropriate for the purpose and audience?;
 - The use interaction skills, for example paraphrasing, questioning and interpreting non- verbal cues and choose vocabulary and vocal effects appropriate for different audiences and purposes;
 - Include the use of vocabulary to express greater precision of meaning, and the ability to know and use words that can have different meanings in different contexts;
 - Refine vocabulary choices to discriminate between shades of meaning, with deliberate attention to the effect on audiences;
 - The ability to express and develop ideas;
 - Vocabulary meanings of words, including every day and specialist meanings, and how words take their meanings from the context of the text;
 - Incorporate new vocabulary from a range of sources into students' own texts including vocabulary encountered in research;
 - The ability to interpret ideas and information in spoken texts and listen for key points in order to carry out tasks and use information to share and extend ideas and information;

- The importance of incorporating listening and speaking interactions;
 - Skills students use when engaging in listening and speaking interactions;
 - Use interaction skills when discussing and presenting ideas and information, selecting body language, voice qualities and other elements, (for example music and sound) to add interest and meaning and
 - Variety of sources accessed and incorporated into research phase.
9. Display the agreed norms.
 10. Instruct teams to nominate a team CAPTAIN. (Responsibilities include: maintaining team discipline and focus, leadership, being fair, delegating group member responsibilities)
 11. **(Optional)**: Once a captain has been nominated, information from a variety of sources needs to be collected by each group member. Information collected should be relevant to their argument. Students will need time to conduct their research using a variety of resources, internet, newspaper, interviewing adults and students etc.

Activity 3 – Debate!

1. Separate the class so that the FOR team is on one side of the class and the AGAINST team is on the other, so they are facing each other.
2. Explain the rules of the debate.
 - The “FOR” group will read the first point of argument and provide evidence for that argument. The “AGAINST” group can then respond with a rebuttal and provide their own point of argument.
 - One person speaks at a time.
 - Debate can continue back and forth until all points of argument are discussed.
 - Each group can finish the debate with a concluding argument.

NOTE: The teacher is the facilitator so needs to monitor each group to assist with understanding their roles, maintaining focus, ensuring that one person speaks at a time and encouraging all members of the group to have a say.

3. When the debate has concluded list the different points of view.
4. Reflection: Ask student to verbalise or document the differences between the language of opinion and feeling and the language of factual reporting or recording.
5. Reflection post-debate: Ask students to reflect on how to move beyond making bare assertions and take account of differing perspectives and points of view.

Activity 4 – Identifying opportunities for change

1. Go back to the original list from activity one: ‘Why do parents drive their kids to school’ and look at the issues that were identified by the class.
2. Split the class into small groups and ask each to brainstorm opportunities for change. For example, if perceived stranger danger is a barrier to walking or cycling, opportunities for change may be to ‘walk in a group’ or ‘start up a walking school bus.’ If road safety concerns are a barrier, then some solutions may include traffic calming to slow traffic down, or practicing walking and cycling with an adult to improve road skills.

Extension

- Ask students to present their findings to the school board or P&C and publish in the school newsletter either in print or digital format.
- Students should create displays of data using lists, table and picture graphs and interpret them.
- Allow the students to take on a persona during the debate. Students may be a worried parent, the school principal, a teacher or a student. Allow the students to role play their opinions.
- Ask students to use the information gained from their debate to write a persuasive text on ‘why students should walk or ride to school.’

Assessment ideas

- Assess student ability to work effectively as a team member while researching ideas for their debate.
- Assess student ability to explore and clarify their own ideas as well as respond to other ideas during the debate.
- Assess persuasive text as outlined in the extension activity.

Links to Australian Curriculum

Subject	Strand	Substrand
English	Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language for interaction • Expressing and developing ideas
	Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interacting with others
Mathematics	Statistics and probability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data representation and interpretation
	Economics and business knowledge and understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wants, resources and choices • Trade-offs and impacts of consumer and financial decisions
Humanities and Social Science	Civics and citizenship knowledge and understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government and society • Roles, responsibilities and participation
	Geographical knowledge and understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Places have distinct features (Year 1) • The Earth's environment sustains all life (Year 4) • Factors that shape the human and environmental characteristics of places (Year 5) • Place and liveability (Year 7)
	Humanities and Social Sciences skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning and Researching • Evaluating • Analysing • Communicating and Reflecting