

History/Social Science Argument *The Controversy over Racism and Education*

The History/Social Science Competition

Each team will compete against approximately 5 other teams during the first heat. The score that your team receives from the panel of judges will be applied to your total score for the day (the scholarship competition). However, the top scoring/ranking team from each group of 5 in the first heat will go onto the History/Social Science final competition. These top teams will compete for first, second and third place for the History/Social Science award/trophy. Therefore, it is possible that a top ranking team from one heat could have a lower score than a second or third ranking team from another heat, and will not move onto the final round. However, their higher score will still place them in an advantage for the overall score for the day (the scholarship competition).

History/Social Science Argument Guidelines

Two or more team members will prepare the history argument and will present it on the Challenge Day before a panel of judges. The argument, which should address the prompt below, should be 6 to 10 minutes in length. Visual aids, like PowerPoint, are allowed. Your argument must include primary source evidence and interviews that the team members have conducted. On the day of the event, you will submit a list of sources used in the development of your argument. If the list of sources is not included, 15 points will be deducted from the final score. If the list of sources is submitted but does not contain either primary source evidence or interviews, 10 points will be deducted from final score. See scoring rubric.

Thesis Argument Background

While many BIPOC* activists, students, parents and educators have long felt a sense of urgency to address racism in education, more recently many white educators have begun to commit to making these changes, particularly after the "awakening" that the George Floyd murder sparked. At the same time, there has been tremendous push back against these changes. Some states have banned any discussions of race. Here in Massachusetts, school committee meetings and social media have erupted into angry public conflicts.

At the center of the growing controversy is the question of how racism in schools should be taught and addressed.

Proponents of teaching about systemic racism argue that systemic racism and systems of power and advantage/disadvantage need to be fundamentally changed.

- Opponents of teaching about racism argue that racism is more a problem of individual bias and discrimination, and that teaching that racism is systemic and built-into American society promotes division, anger, blame and intolerance.

Prompt: Should our public schools teach all students:

A. That systemic racism is embedded in US laws, culture, economy, politics and education and that achieving equity requires that institutional racism in schools be dismantled?

OR

B. That racism is solely a matter individual acts of prejudice and discrimination and that, rather than teaching about racism, schools need to make sure that African American and Latino/a students have equal opportunity.

Your argument must include:

1. Your reasoning for why you support A. or B., and why you do not support the other choice.
2. Whether you agree with the critics of "Position A" (e.g., that anti-racism education is "indoctrination" rather than "education").
3. Whether you agree with the critics of "Position B" (e.g., that this approach will neither change racial inequities in schools or in society).
3. Your understanding of the national and local political controversies surrounding these changes.
4. Historical and present-day evidence that supports your argument.
5. Your ideas about "how" this material should be taught.

Please refer to the specific requirements below:

- 1. Be sure to review the rubric before you begin your research**
2. Presentation length 6-10 minutes
3. Visual aids may be used
4. Minimum of two face to face, telephone or Skype interviews with people from the following categories:
 - Anti-racism academics/professors/writers
 - Health experts and/or activists
 - Experts in other systemic racism domains

*BIPOC: Black, Indigenous and People of Color

** David Wellman and Others