

BLOG YOUR VIEWS: It's easy to have an opinion — but can you defend it?

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will write a column about a recent event at the school or in their community, integrating fact and well-reasoned opinion in an article to be published on the class blog.

SET UP

Create a class blog using a free blogging application (blogger.com, for example.) Grant post-only access to each student. (Alternatively, you may permit your students to create their own blogs, however instructors should be aware that the controls that can be placed on a student's personal blog are more limited than a blog created for specific classroom purposes.)

LEARNING ACTIVITY

- Students will conduct original research on a recent event or issue at their school or in their community, including reading all available accounts of the subject (including news, blogs, social networking, etc.) and conducting original interviews with “key players.”
- Students will research other events or issues that are similar in nature to their chosen subject.
- Students will craft a one-sentence “nut graph” (thesis) in which they express a strong opinion on the subject and post it to the class blog as a new entry.
- Using the “comments” feature, and regardless of their true personal opinions on the matter, fellow students will play “devil’s advocate,” expressing and concisely defending a contrary opinion. Depending on class size, students should comment on three to five entries each.
- Students will construct a personal column and provide supporting evidence that buttresses their argument against their fellow students’ “devil’s advocate” arguments.
- The completed column will be published to the class blog.

SCORING BENCHMARKS

Participation: The student completed readings, research and interviews and turned in all parts of the assignment ahead of the deadline. The student participated in playing “devil’s advocate” on the requisite number of other students’ blogs.

Information: The completed assignment is the product of significant research, including at least one original interview, which is cited in the text.

Composition: The column is structured logically, utilizes an active voice, and is free of all spelling any grammatical errors.

Persuasion: The student has buttressed his or her argument against the arguments expressed in the “devil’s advocate” assignment. The column presents a compelling argument in support of the student’s thesis/nut graph.