Prompts
and
Accompanying
Texts
for
Essay Writing

Susan Giuliano
Nassau BOCES
Adult Learning Center

Lisa Wright
Long Beach
Adult Learning Center

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Should Schools Institute Tougher Dress Codes?

Schools throughout the country are instituting tougher dress codes than ever before. Many schools have adopted required school uniforms, though some have merely instituted strict codes of appropriate types and colors of clothing. Though popular with many students and families, strict dress codes have come under criticism on a number of grounds including infringing First Amendment rights.

Weigh the claims on both sides, and then write an argumentative essay supporting either side of the debate in which you argue whether or not schools should institute tougher dress codes. Use information from the text in your essay.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the two texts:

1. **"School uniforms give students confidence and a sense of belonging at school."**
2. **"Risk of discrimination, ineffective against bullying."**

As you read the texts, think about which details you might use in your essay. Take notes on the details as you read.

After reading the two texts, create a plan for writing your essay. Think about what you know about the topic. Think about other information, details and examples that you may want to use. Plan how you will introduce the topic and think about the main ideas of the paragraphs in your essay.

School uniforms give students confidence and a sense of belonging at school.

While the cost of uniforms may seem prohibitive, proponents believe that the investment is worthwhile. Supporters report increased student self-confidence, a sense of safety and belonging, and a reduced focus on clothing as some of the significant benefits of school uniforms. Educators cite uniforms as a visible shift toward an "educational culture."

As educator Kendra Newburgh told the New York Times,"Academics are really important, and uniforms are a piece of that…when you walk into this building as a student, you're not focused on what someone else is wearing." For her students, wearing a school uniform signals that they are ready to participate in the important job of learning.

Students in uniforms improve teachers' perception of their abilities

Interestingly, uniforms also appear to also have an influence on teacher attitudes about student success. In a 2007 study in the Journal of Ethnographic and Qualitative Research, John Huss noted a significant shift in teacher perceptions of uniformed over non-uniformed students. Students often rise to the expectations of their teachers; a surprising benefit to school uniforms is that not only do students feel more connected with their learning roles when wearing uniforms, they are also perceived to be better at them.

Risk of discrimination, ineffective against bullying

Public school uniforms are not without controversy. In addition to concern about expense, critics have argued that because urban and high-poverty schools are the most likely to have uniforms, making them mandatory unfairly targets students of color and poor students. Other opponents contend that requiring uniforms is a superficial solution for issues like bullying and cliques that are better managed with behavioral interventions.

Do school uniforms violate students' First Amendment rights?

In addition, foes of uniforms say that they impose conformity and stifle students' self-expression. A recent court case in Nevada charged that an elementary school uniform policy that required students to wear shirts with the school motto infringed upon their First Amendment rights, and

that the youth organization exemption policy unnecessarily shut out local or regional organizations. Ultimately, the court found in favor of the school's right to impose a uniform policy but required changes to the policy to properly protect students' rights to free expression.

It seems clear that there are both advantages and disadvantages to the implementation of school uniform requirements. With the advent of charter schools and increased school choice, individual districts may be able to provide access to schools with varying dress codes, allowing students and their parents a uniform option without blanket requirements.

Should the Drinking Age Be Lowered?

All 50 US states have set their minimum drinking age to 21 although exceptions do exist on a state-by-state basis for consumption at home, under adult supervision, for medical necessity, and other reasons.

Proponents of lowering the minimum legal drinking age (MLDA) from 21 argue that it has not stopped teen drinking, and has instead pushed underage binge drinking into private and less controlled environments, leading to more health and life-endangering behavior by teens.

Opponents of lowering the MLDA argue that teens have not yet reached an age where they can handle alcohol responsibly, and thus are more likely to harm or even kill themselves and others by drinking prior to 21. They contend that traffic fatalities decreased when the MLDA increased.

Weigh the claims on both sides, and then write an argumentative essay supporting either side of the debate in which you argue whether or not the drinking age should be lowered. Use information from the text in your essay.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the the text:

1. *"Raising the Drinking Age to 21 Has Been a Disastrous 30-Year Experiment"*
2. *"Why 21? Addressing Underage Drinking" and "Myths and Facts about the 21 Minimum Drinking Age"*

As you read the texts, think about which details you might use in your essay. Take notes on the details as you read.

After reading the two texts, create a plan for writing your essay. Think about what you know about the topic. Think about other information, details and examples that you may want to

use. Plan how you will introduce the topic and think about the main ideas of the paragraphs in your essay.

"Raising the Drinking Age to 21 Has Been a Disastrous 30-Year Experiment"
S. Georgia Nugent, PhD, Interim President of Wooster College, in a Feb. 10, 2015 New York Times article .

"As a former college president, I have joined with many of my colleagues to advocate lowering the minimum drinking age from 21 to 18, because we believe the 21-year-old limit has created, rather than solved, problems. America's earlier experiment with prohibition was a notorious failure. Yet in 1984, America again enacted prohibition on a more limited scale, becoming one of only a handful of nations in the world with a minimum drinking age of 21. I believe that our 30 years of experience with prohibition for young people has been a serious failure as well.

There are a number of arguments against the 21-year minimum age. Foremost, in my mind, is the dramatic rise in binge drinking among young people since the 1984 change — with its consequent danger to health and safety. When it is legal for an 18-year-old to drive, marry or serve in the military but illegal for him or her to drink a beer, the illogic of the situation is patent. As a result, the overwhelming response of young people has been, not compliance, but contempt for the law. By outlawing moderate use of alcohol in appropriate social contexts and with adult oversight, we have driven more drinking underground, where it has taken the very dangerous form of 'pre-gaming.' The 'under-age' drinker, no longer permitted the occasional beer during a dance party, is now more likely to chug high-octane alcohol in dangerous quantities before heading off to that party. As a result, alcohol use has become more, not less, dangerous."

"Why 21? Addressing Underage Drinking" and "Myths and Facts about the 21 Minimum Drinking Age"
Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) webpage on www.madd.org (accessed Jan. 26, 2016)

"Why do we make young people wait until 21 to drink alcohol?
Many activities have ages of initiation... The age limit for alcohol is based on research which shows that young people react differently to alcohol. Teens get drunk twice as fast as adults, but have more trouble knowing when to stop. Teens naturally overdo it and binge more often than

adults. Enforcing the legal drinking age of 21 reduces traffic crashes, protects young people's maturing brains, and keeps young people safer overall.

Can't parents teach their teens how to drink alcohol responsibly by giving them small amounts—under supervision—before they reach 21?
Some states permit parents to do this with their own child, but there's no evidence that this approach actually works. As matter of fact, there is evidence to contrary. When teens feel they have their parents' approval to drink, they do it more and more often when they are not with their parents. When parents have concrete, enforced rules about alcohol, young people binge drink less.

Would lowering the legal drinking age make alcohol less of a big deal, and less attractive to teens?
History says no. When states had lower legal drinking ages in the U.S., the underage drinking problem was worse. For example, before the 21 minimum legal drinking age was implemented by all states, underage drunk drivers were involved in over twice as many fatal traffic crashes as today.

I thought Europeans have fewer underage drinking problems … is it because their kids drink from an earlier age?
That's a myth. European countries have worse problems than America does, as far as binge drinking and drinking to intoxication. Studies show that Europe has more underage drunkenness, injury, rape, and school problems due to alcohol. Since alcohol is more available there, it actually increases the proportion of kids who drink in Europe.

Drinking is just a phase all kids go through; they'll grow out of it.
Actually, many don't. In fact, the earlier someone begins drinking, the more likely they are to be alcohol dependent in later life. More than 40 percent of individuals who start drinking before the age of 13 will develop alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence at some point in their lives. Ninety-five percent of the 14 million people who are alcohol dependent began drinking before the legal age of 21."

Do Video Games Cause Violent Behavior?

As many as 97% of US kids age 12-17 play video games, contributing to the $21.53 billion domestic video game industry. More than half of the 50 top-selling video games contain violence. Violent video games have been blamed for school shootings, increases in bullying, and violence towards women. Video game advocates argue that violent video games may provide a safe outlet for aggressive and angry feelings and may reduce crime. Is there a connection between violence and video games?

Weigh the claims on both sides, and then write an argumentative essay supporting either side of the debate in which you argue whether or not there is a connection between violence and video games. Use information from both texts in your essay.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the two texts:

1. **Video Games Cause Real-life Violence**
2. **Video games have positive effects on players and their behavior**

As you read the texts, think about which details you might use in your essay. Take notes on the details as you read.

After reading the two texts, create a plan for writing your essay. Think about what you know about the topic. Think about other information, details and examples that you may want to use. Plan how you will introduce the topic and think about the main ideas of the paragraphs in your essay.

Video Games Cause Real-life Violence

Simulating violence such as shooting guns and hand-to-hand combat in video games can cause real-life violent behavior. Video games often require players to simulate violent actions, such as stabbing, shooting, or dismembering someone with an ax, sword, chainsaw, or other weapons. Game controllers are so sophisticated and the games are so realistic that simulating the violent acts enhances the learning of those violent behaviors. A 2015 peer-reviewed study found "compelling evidence that the use of realistic controllers can have a significant effect on the level of cognitive aggression." Two teenagers in Tennessee who shot at passing cars and killed one driver told police they got the idea from playing *Grand Theft Auto III*. Bruce Bartholow, professor of psychology at the University of Missouri, spoke about the effects of simulating violence: "More than any other media, these [violent] video games encourage active participation in violence. From a psychological perspective, video games are excellent teaching tools because they reward players for engaging in certain types of behavior. Unfortunately, in many popular video games, the behavior is violence." A Sep. 2014 peer-reviewed study found that first-person shooter games trained players to have better accuracy in shooting a gun outside the game, and made them more likely to aim for the head.

Video games encourage and reward violent behavior. Violent video games reinforce fighting as a means of dealing with conflict by rewarding the use of violent action with increased life force, more weapons, moving on to higher levels, and more. Studies suggest that when violence is rewarded in video games, players exhibit increased aggressive behavior compared to players of video games where violence is punished. The reward structure is one distinguishing factor between violent video games and other violent media such as movies and television shows, which do not reward viewers nor allow them to actively participate in violence. An analysis of 81 video games rated for teens ages 13 and up found that 73 games (90%) rewarded injuring other characters, and 56 games (69%) rewarded killing. People who played a video game that rewarded violence showed higher levels of aggressive behavior and aggressive cognition as compared with people who played a version of the same game that was competitive but either did not contain violence or punished violence.

Video games have positive effects on players and their behavior

Studies have shown that violent video games can have a positive effect on kindness, civic engagement, and "prosocial" behaviors. Research shows that playing violent video games can induce a feeling of guilt that leads to increased prosocial behavior (positive actions that benefit others) in the real world. Another study published in *Computers in Human Behavior* discovered that youths exposed to violence in action games displayed more prosocial behavior and civic engagement, "possibly due to the team-oriented multiplayer options in many of these games." In a 2013 peer-reviewed study published in *PLOS ONE*, "Three experiments failed to find a detrimental effect of violent video games on prosocial behavior [positive actions taken to benefit others], despite using contemporary and classic games, delayed and immediate test-phases, and short and long exposures." Researchers have shown that playing video games also results in increased moral sensitivity.

Violent video games allow players to release their stress and anger (catharsis) in the game, leading to less real world aggression. A peer-reviewed study published in the Journal of Adolescent Health found that children, especially boys, play video games as a means of managing their emotions: "61.9% of boys played to 'help me relax,' 47.8% because 'it helps me forget my problems,' and 45.4% because 'it helps me get my anger out." Researchers point to the cathartic effect of video games as a possible reason for why higher game sales have been associated with lower crime rates. A peer-reviewed study in the Journal of Adolescent Research concluded that "Boys use games to experience fantasies of power and fame, to explore and master what they perceive as exciting and realistic environments (but distinct from real life), to work through angry feelings or relieve stress, and as social tools."The games serve as a substitute for rough-and-tumble play.

ProCon.org. (2015, September 23). Violent Video Games ProCon.org. Retrieved from
http://videogames.procon.org/

Are Electric Cars Better for the Environment?

Global warming is an important issue. Some people believe that electric cars are good for the environment and help stop global warming. Others are not so sure.

Weigh the claims on both sides, then write an argumentative essay supporting either side in which you argue for or against electric cars.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the two texts:

1. **Global Warming: 6 Ways Electric Cars Are Better for the Environment**
2. **Electric Cars May Not Be Better For The Environment In Places Where Power Comes From Coal**

As you read the texts, think about which details you might use in your essay. Take notes on the details as you read.

After reading the two texts, create a plan for writing your essay. Think about what you know about the topic. Think about other information, details and examples that you may want to use. Plan how you will introduce the topic and think about the main ideas of the paragraphs in your essay.

Global Warming: 6 Ways Electric Cars Are Better for the Environment
By Jerry Shaw, www.newsmax.com March 22nd, 2015

Electric cars hold a lot of promise for a healthy environment. As the effects of global warming become more of a concern to people, the use of these cars could become more popular in the years ahead.

Here are six ways electric cars are better for the environment:

1. Electric cars produce fewer greenhouse gases. Although the cars can cause environmental damage when getting power from coal-producing plants, electric cars would dramatically reduce the amount of greenhouse gasses when powered by plants that don't produce greenhouse gases. Even when generated from coal-burning plants, electric cars would reduce carbon dioxide emissions by as much as 22 percent when compared to cars.

2. Although electric cars still have a problem with needing frequent recharges, hybrid electric cars combine a standard engine with battery power. When the hybrid's battery runs low, the engine gives it an extra boost. Hybrid cars offer the possibility of using power from a normal electric grid, avoiding the use of coal-burning power in the future.

3. Increased use of electric cars would reduce the amount of smog-forming pollutants produced by cars by as much as 32 to 99 percent, according to Sherry Boschert, author of Plug-in Hybrids: The Cars that Will Recharge America.

4. Electric cars use half as much fossil fuel even when being supplied by fossil-fuel burning plants. The energy they use is twice as efficient as cars over the same distance, according to electric vehicle advocate Chip Gribben.

5. As researchers look for more alternative ways to replace oil-producing vehicles that can damage the environment, electric cars provide cleaner energy when power comes from a cleaner electric grid. The environment will benefit from the growing use of electric cars as improvements are made for renewable power generation, according to Paul Scott, co-founder of Plug-In America, an electric vehicle advocacy group.

6. Electric cars have environmental advantages over gas- and diesel-powered cars in other areas, such as ozone pollution, consumption of water and use of steel and copper materials. Although the cars still face some disadvantages until improvements or changes are made, electric cars might provide better options in the future to combat global warming.

Electric Cars May Not Be Better For The Environment In Places Where Power Comes From Coal

By Seth Borenstein, www.huffingtonpost.com December 15th, 2014

WASHINGTON (AP) — People who own all-electric cars where coal generates the power may think they are helping the environment. But a new study finds their vehicles actually make the air dirtier, worsening global warming.
Ethanol isn't so green, either.

"It's kind of hard to beat gasoline" for public and environmental health, said study co-author Julian Marshall, an engineering professor at the University of Minnesota. "A lot of the technologies that we think of as being clean ... are not better than gasoline."

The key is where the source of the electricity all-electric cars. If it comes from coal, the electric cars produce 3.6 times more soot and smog deaths than gas, because of the pollution made in generating the electricity, according to the study that is published Monday by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. They also are significantly worse at heat-trapping carbon dioxide that worsens global warming, it found.

The study examines environmental costs for cars' entire life cycle, including where power comes from and the environmental effects of building batteries.

"Unfortunately, when a wire is connected to an electric vehicle at one end and a coal-fired power plant at the other end, the environmental consequences are worse than driving a normal gasoline-powered car," said Ken Caldeira of the Carnegie Institution for Science, who wasn't part of the study but praised it.

The states with the highest percentage of electricity coming from coal, according to the Department of Energy, are West Virginia, Wyoming, Ohio, North Dakota, and Illinois.
Still, there's something to be said for the idea of helping foster a cleaner technology that will be better once it is connected to a cleaner grid, said study co-author Jason Hill, another University of Minnesota engineering professor.

The study finds all-electric vehicles cause 86 percent more deaths from air pollution than do cars powered by regular gasoline. Coal produces 39 percent of the country's electricity, according to the Department of Energy.

But if the power supply comes from natural gas, the all-electric car produces half as many air pollution health problems as gas-powered cars do. And if the power comes from wind, water or wave energy, it produces about one-quarter of the air pollution deaths.

Hybrids and diesel engines are cleaner than gas, causing fewer air pollution deaths and spewing less heat-trapping gas.

But ethanol isn't, with 80 percent more air pollution mortality, according to the study.
"If we're using ethanol for environmental benefits, for air quality and climate change, we're going down the wrong path," Hill said.

Should Drones Be Regulated?

Drones used to be thought of something that only the military used. Now anyone can purchase a drone. There are a wide variety of uses for drones for both commercial and personal use. The increased usage of drones leads to the question: Does the government need to regulate drones?

Read the text below then write an argumentative essay asserting whether or not drones need to be regulated. Use information from the text in your essay.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the text:

1. **How Should Drones Be Regulated? Balancing Privacy, Airspace Rules**

As you read the text, think about which details you might use in your essay. Take notes on the details as you read.

After reading the text, create a plan for writing your essay. Think about what you know about the topic. Think about other information, details and examples that you may want to use. Plan how you will introduce the topic and think about the main ideas of the paragraphs in your essay.

How Should Drones Be Regulated? Balancing Privacy, Airspace Rules

John-Michael Seibler / October 14, 2015

The Federal Aviation Administration missed its Sept. 30 deadline to file national regulations for drone use.

Interest groups sent a letter to Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Michael Huerta to mark the occasion, and to announce that people are "already confused about where they should and should not fly."

This missed deadline will halt commercial use. For non-commercial use, it might not be so bad.

The letter asserts that in the first decade of a well-regulated drone industry, innovators would create "100,000 jobs and $82 billion in economic impact." This includes capacities like helping first responders execute rescue missions, insurance companies survey disaster sites, and farmers "improve crop yields."

The authors think that once regulations are in place, business can move forward. How the drone industry moves forward, of course, depends on the nature of FAA regulations.

Non-commercial drone uses demand a unique regulatory scheme. In the absence of clear regulatory guidance, property owners are resolving this confusion the old-fashioned way: shooting down drones they perceive to be threatening or violate their privacy.

In July, a Kentucky resident thought his neighbor flew a drone too close to his family, and he shot it down.

A similar story recently occurred in Ascension Parish, La., where a family that lives next to a drone hobbyist asked him not to fly his camera-equipped drone over their property.

They had called police about the drone before. And the police seconded that request.

When the hobbyist flew his drone over his neighbor's property anyway, the neighbor shot it. One shot disabled the drone. A second shot, allegedly in the presence of, and over the protests of, the hobbyist and his seven-year-old niece, grounded the drone.

So how had the law developed between shots in Kentucky and Louisiana?

Lt. Col. Bobby Webre of the Ascension Parish Sheriff's Office conveyed the perspective of local law enforcement. They are looking to FAA rules for guidance, especially in the absence of any Louisiana state laws. Webre states that the FAA "'seriously recommends getting permission from the property owner' if you want to fly a drone over their property."

Federal rules forbid drones flying in some specific restricted airspaces, like those around natural disasters or emergency response situations, or airports. Beyond that, Webre declared the guiding principle for drone use ought to be "good common sense and respect [for] people's reasonable expectation of privacy."

Early American legal thinkers reveled in the notion that "[l]aws are made for men of ordinary understanding, and should, therefore, be construed by the ordinary rules of common sense." The law was intentionally imbued with the idea that democracy would be of little value if laws, especially criminal law, went too far beyond that maxim.

A federal drone regulation scheme is probably less likely than a local judge and jury to reflect the common sense or community conscience in Ascension Parish, Louisiana.

If and when federal regulations are passed, Webre will face the same issue James Madison raised: How do we obey and enforce a law if it is "little known and less fixed"?

As always, the answer demands good judgment based on community conscience.

That should be enough to hold over hobbyists and their neighbors until the regulatory framework fills out, because existing criminal laws and the civil justice system safeguard their property and tort interests.

A federal regulatory scheme introduced on an "incremental basis," as an FAA spokesperson announced any regulations would be, risks being "little known and less fixed." And that's a recipe for costs outweighing benefits.

Existing local, state, and federal laws, both civil and criminal, should suffice to protect people, as much as any law can, from harms associated with recreational drone use.

How Young is Too Young to Have a Cell Phone?

Almost everyone has a cell phone. As cell phones become more and more standard the question isn't whether or not children should have a cell phone but at what age? How young is too young to have a cell phone?

Read the text and then write an informational essay detailing reasons for parents to give their children a cell phone and strategies to help make it useful and safe. Be sure to use information from the text in your essay.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the text:

1. **Kids with cell phones: How young is too young?**

As you read the text, think about which details you might use in your essay. Take notes on the details as you read.

After reading the text, create a plan for writing your essay. Think about what you know about the topic. Think about other information, details and examples that you may want to use. Plan how you will introduce the topic and think about the main ideas of the paragraphs in your essay.

Kids with cell phones: How young is too young?
by Lindsey Boerma, cbsnews.com

It's a question parents have debated for over a decade: At what age should their kids be allowed to have their own cell phones?

The reality is that most kids have mobile cellular devices well before high school.

John Breyault, vice president of public policy, telecommunications and fraud at the National Consumers League, commissioned a study in 2012 that found nearly 60 percent of parents said they offered cell phones to their children at ages 10 or 11. Since then, that average age has gotten even younger, and the prevalence of cell phones among teens and pre-teens has nearly doubled, said Shawn DuBravac, chief economist and senior director of research at the Consumer Electronics Association.

"Today about 80 percent of teens between 12 and 17 own a cell phone, and about half of those own a smart phone," said DuBravac. "That's about twice the rate from just two years ago."

Some carriers, like Sprint with its "WeGo" device, are marketing cell phones to kids as young as five: "It's not uncommon to see, really, two and three year olds becoming quite fluent with using a touch tablet or a touch device," DuBravac said. "So by the time they turn 6, 7, 8, they're very comfortable with the mobile devices."

But how young is too young? Consumer experts recommend a case-by-case approach.

"Are their kids responsible enough to have a phone when they are, maybe, 8?" Breyault asked. "Or do they need to wait a little later to make sure they know the responsibility that comes with having a phone? So that could be 13, 14, maybe even older.

"...This is an age group where they are doing a lot of activities outside the home, things like sports practices, after-school activities, going over to friends' houses, some of them going to the mall on their own," he went on. "So most parents we surveyed said they were getting the phone so the kid could stay in touch with them."

And though critics abound who believe cellular technology is driving a stake through face-to-face interactions, DuBravac made the case that in an age in which families are often strained for time together, such devices can act as a relationship resuscitator: "Parents I've talked to generally love that their kids have cell phones because they can text them when maybe a call wouldn't work, they could get a note out," he said. "I know students will often send photos of reports or grades that they've gotten to their parents."

Experts recommend that before allowing their children to have cell phones, parents should have a conversation with them about "digital hygiene" practices: staying within data limits, avoiding inappropriate content, and steering clear of privacy risks and cyber-bullying.

"Kids learn by example," DuBravac said. "So they're gonna follow the way you use technology. We encourage parents to use technology wisely, for example if they're in the vehicle, especially if they're driving."

And in the spirit of back-to-school season, teachers, too, will be tasked with staying alert and up to speed on the technology that kids may be bringing into the classroom.

"Many school administrators are wrestling with this problem now," Breyault said. "Certainly having a little computer right in your pocket can be a powerful incentive to try to cheat on tests for example... this poses new questions for them. Do they need to make sure the cell phones stay in book bags or in lockers for example?"

Meanwhile, some school districts are embracing the cell phone craze, installing technology like smart boards, which allow classroom content to be digitally accessed on smart phones or tablets. DuBravac encouraged a "forward-looking" approach for school districts as more kids come wielding mobile devices.

"The use of technology among teens and preteens has always been a storyline," he said, "whether it was the use of portable video games in the 80s or even calculators in the 60s and 70s. So schools have always looked at how technology can be and should be integrated into the curriculum."

Breyault agreed mobile technology offers the potential to be an asset in the classroom: "They know that they have these devices, they know that they're on them constantly," he said. "So certainly there are vast upsides to putting technology and cell phones in the hands of kids and letting them use them in an educational context. But like with any other tool, you have to make sure that it's used appropriately."

Is Affirmative Action Still Necessary?

Affirmative action was originated to increase diversity in educational and business institutions. Now in the 21st century some people feel that affirmative action is no longer needed and in fact detrimental to minorities. Others feel that affirmative action is still needed because racism is still prevalent in many institutions.

Weigh the claims on both sides, then write an argumentative essay supporting either side in which you argue for or against the necessity of affirmative action.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the two texts:

1. **Affirmative action still relevant today**
2. **It's More Than Diversity: Why Affirmative Action is Still Needed Today**

As you read the texts, think about which details you might use in your essay. Take notes on the details as you read.

After reading the two texts, create a plan for writing your essay. Think about what you know about the topic. Think about other information, details and examples that you may want to use. Plan how you will introduce the topic and think about the main ideas of the paragraphs in your essay.

Affirmative action still relevant today
By Rachel Tan

The U.S. Supreme Court will shortly rule on two cases regarding affirmative action. Fisher v. University of Texas concerns Abigail Fisher, a white woman who claims that her rejection from the university was influenced by its policy of considering race in admissions decisions. Fisher represents the growing consensus that racial discrimination on any grounds is unacceptable, and a broad ruling on the case could result in the overturning of Grutter v. Bollinger, effectively ending affirmative action at U.S. universities.

The second case, Schuette v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action, questions whether Michigan state is violating the Equal Protection Clause by amending its constitution to prohibit race and sex based preferential treatment in public university admissions. At the same time, the Supreme Court is considering whether to overturn Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, which is being challenged by Shelby County, Ala.

All three cases raise critical questions about the Equal Protection clause: does affording all people with equal consideration necessarily mean treating them in the same way? Do we have a moral obligation to atone for historic discriminations suffered by certain minorities? Does this obligation have an expiry date? Sandra Day O'Connor, for instance, declared in 2003 that affirmative action should no longer be necessary within 25 years.

There are three main arguments in favor of affirmative action. The first is that universities are made fundamentally better by diversity. This argument doesn't hold; students might benefit from having a more diverse peer group but they could lose out from having an academically weaker class. It is not obvious that race should correspond to cultural diversity or that any benefits of a more diverse experience should override the right to equal consideration.
The second argument is that affirmative action is an atonement for historic injustices. This fails for two reasons. We cannot atone for historic discrimination by granting preferential treatment to a different generation. There is also evidence that this hurts minorities by placing them into universities which they are not well-placed for, potentially resulting in lower graduation rates.

The final argument states that unequal treatment is sometimes necessary to enable equal consideration. Society is unequal and the legacy of discrimination is entrenched in the systems designed for white men, by white men, that persist today. This is a compelling but uncomfortable argument, perhaps because it brings up an uneasy association with that notorious phrase "separate but equal."

But when we argue that unequal treatment is always wrong, and university admissions should be based upon merit alone, we run into a contradiction; we can't really define merit, beyond some vague idea that it means the most deserving and the most suited. Who is more deserving — the hardest-working or the most intelligent student? If a student grows up in poverty and receives test scores a fraction lower than a Kennedy or a Clinton, who is more deserving? Is the "most-suited" student the one who has progressed the furthest academically, or the one with the most potential to progress?

Critics of affirmative action often talk about merit as if it is a single objective measure, but merit

is a subjective assessment. Universities request a range of information from applicants to build up a profile about their potential, and applicants are encouraged to discuss factors that have influenced their decisions. A university might legitimately consider an Olympic athlete to be more impressive than another student with similar scores. They might consider that someone with two part-time jobs has additional potential to be realized. And they might consider that someone who grew up in a poor black neighborhood could have more potential than their test scores suggest.

Universities should not impose racial quotas or assign point increases to minorities, but they should be able to make subjective decisions on the impact of race on a student's achievements and prospects, just as they make judgments on factors like schools, activities and achievements outside of academia.

Race is still relevant today, and critics who disparage the use of race as a proxy for socioeconomic status fail to acknowledge how accurate it can be. The unemployment rate for blacks is double that of whites and the wealth gap between whites and minorities increased over the last 25 years. But race isn't just a proxy for socioeconomic status, because while Shelby County may believe that discrimination and disenfranchisement is something of the past, it isn't. 2012 saw the proposal of new voting laws which would restrict the ability of minorities to vote, including onerous identification requirements despite overwhelming evidence that voter fraud is negligible.

America in 2013 still needs the Voting Rights Act and affirmative action, not in spite of equal protection but to enable equal protection. And when does the obligation to consider race end? Perhaps when all children genuinely have equal opportunities to determine their lives.

It's More Than Diversity: Why Affirmative Action is Still Needed Today
By Alex, www.dailykos.com

This fall the United States Supreme Court will yet again hear arguments on the controversial case, Fisher v. University of Texas, regarding the legality of affirmative action policies in college admissions. As the Supreme Court ponders a decision that will have a huge impact on access to a quality and affordable college education for black and brown students, the nation should reflect on the original intent of affirmative action policies and the need for the law in higher education today.

When discussing the benefits of affirmative action policies in higher education a lot of advocates reference the importance of having a diverse student body (which exposes students to different races and cultural perspectives they will undoubtedly encounter in the workplace). Promoting diversity, although a critical component of affirmative action, was not the original intent of such laws. Two additional reasons why race conscious admission policies in higher education are still needed today are: (1) to rectify past effects of discrimination on people of color and (2) to ensure that implicit biases do not obstruct black and brown students' access to a quality college education.

Affirmative action grew out of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and was meant to remedy past effects of discrimination on people of color. Today, more than five decades since Brown v. Board of Education and James Meredith became the first black student admitted to the University of Mississippi, black and brown students in the nation still receive a far worse preK-12 public school education than white children. Comprehensive data released last year by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights tells us this:

- "A quarter of high schools with the highest percentage of black and Latino students do not offer any Algebra II courses, while a third of those schools do not have any chemistry classes."

- "Black students are more than four times as likely as white students — and Latino students are twice as likely — to attend schools where one out of every five teachers does not meet all state teaching requirements."

- "Black, Latino, American Indian and Native Alaskan students are three times as likely as white students to attend schools with higher concentrations of first-year teachers."

- "As early as preschool, black students face harsher discipline than other students -[which takes kids away from valuable in-class learning time]- ".

- "More than 70 percent of white students attend schools that offer a full range of math and science courses — including algebra, biology, calculus, chemistry, geometry and physics — just over half of all black students have access to those courses. Just over two-thirds of Latinos attend schools with the full range of math and science courses, and less than half of American Indian and Native Alaskan students are able to enroll in as many high-level math and science courses as their white peers."

The data paints a clear picture of the unequal education students of color still receive in the United States. Affirmative action policies that take into account race – as one of many considerations – in college admission does its important job of ensuring that kids who are getting the raw end in K-12 are not also cheated out of access to a quality college education. College admission systems should not be "color-blind" until students of all races receive an equitable K-12 education.

The second reason why I think affirmative action policies are necessary even in today's age are because of implicit biases. I'll sum up implicit bias this way: centuries of attitudes and behaviors in the United States that black and brown students are 'less than' their white counterparts have affected our understanding, actions, and behavior towards individuals based on their skin color. These biases manifest in many ways; some examples include holding the opinion of a white person higher than that of a black person or how we judge intelligence and acceptable social behavior based off of the standards of one segment of society. In education, it often takes the form of teachers, mostly white teachers, having lower expectations for black and Hispanic students than Asian or white students. This is harmful to students: Evidence has shown that

teachers, if they know the race of students, will unconsciously grade black and brown students harsher than white and Asian students. Implicit biases are also evident in school discipline disparities. As a nation we are utterly blind to these inherent biases (the same ones that make khaki pants and a grey hoodie worn by a black man suspicious looking). We must continue to acknowledge race in higher education to ensure that subtle prejudices don't obstruct the advancement of black and brown students.

Access to higher education goes a long way in helping to end cycles of racism. When any student gains admission to college that is a cause for celebration not a court case. Opponents and proponents of race-based affirmation action can all celebrate together the day that the law is no longer necessary. But that day is not today.

Is a College Education Worth It?

Many students grow up thinking they want to go to college. But, is college for everyone? Is the time, cost and commitment worth it? What advice would you give to someone considering attending college?

Read the text and then write an informational essay detailing reasons for students to consider attending college. Be sure to use information from the text in your essay.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the text:

1. **Is a College Education Worth It?**

As you read the text, think about which details you might use in your essay. Take notes on the details as you read.

After reading the text, create a plan for writing your essay. Think about what you know about the topic. Think about other information, details and examples that you may want to use. Plan how you will introduce the topic and think about the main ideas of the paragraphs in your essay.

Is a College Education Worth It?

Yes: "Education helps us be better people. It helps us be better citizens. You came to college to learn about the world and to engage with new ideas and to discover the things you're passionate about -- and maybe have a little fun. And to expand your horizons. That's terrific -- that's a huge part of what college has to offer.

But you're also here, now more than ever, because a college degree is the surest ticket to the middle class. It is the key to getting a good job that pays a good income -- and to provide you the security where even if you don't have the same job for 30 years, you're so adaptable and you have a skill set and the capacity to learn new skills, it ensures you're always employable.

And that is the key not just for individual Americans, that's the key for this whole country's ability to compete in the global economy. In the new economy, jobs and businesses will go wherever the most skilled, best-educated workforce resides... And I want them to look no further than the United States of America."

~Barack Obama, JD, 44th President of the United States, in remarks at Pellissippi State Community College in Tennessee on Jan. 9, 2015, available at www.whitehouse.gov

No: "Community college is great if it helps you get a bachelor's degree, but only one in five students attending these institutions goes on to earn the degree within six years according to federal data. In addition, only 21% of first-time, full-time students earn an associate's degree within three years, and tuition is not the main obstacle to the completion of a degree for low-income students.

Census Bureau data reveal that for most students with some college and no degree, it actually pays—in pure earnings premiums—to pursue a professional certification or educational certificate instead of a stand-alone associate's degree…

Today, many employers demand more and higher academic credentials because of their dissatisfaction with the quality of degree-holders…

Continued focus on a college degree loses sight of the needs of most first-generation, low-income and minority students…

College is not the only path into the middle class."

~Michelle R. Weise, PhD, Higher Education Senior Research Fellow at the Clayton Christensen Institute, in the Jan. 12, 2015 article, "Obama's Dead-End Community College Plan," available at www.wsj.com

Should There Be Background Checks to Buy Guns?

There appears to be an increase in gun violence throughout the country. Recent incidents of mass shootings have sparked conversations about gun control. One such conversation is the need for background checks to buy guns. Proponents feel background checks will help prevent some gun violence while opponents view background checks as a violation of an individual's rights. Should there be background checks?

Weigh the claims on both sides, and then write an argumentative essay supporting either side of the debate in which you argue whether or not there should be background checks to buy guns. Use information from both texts in your essay.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the two texts:

1. **Broken Background Checks Won't Stop Gun Violence**
2. **It's Easy to Understand: Background Checks Save Lives**

As you read the texts, think about which details you might use in your essay. Take notes on the details as you read.

After reading the two texts, create a plan for writing your essay. Think about what you know about the topic. Think about other information, details and examples that you may want to use. Plan how you will introduce the topic and think about the main ideas of the paragraphs in your essay.

Broken Background Checks Won't Stop Gun Violence

By Chris Cox April 9, 2013, at 4:33 p.m. + More

Members of Congress should reject the idea that expanding a broken background check system will make anyone safer. The American people deserve better than politicians who continue to pursue failed policy agendas. Americans deserve to be safe in their communities and to have their Second Amendment rights respected. We can achieve both.

Congress should support the NICS Reporting Improvement Act of 2013, introduced by Senators Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and Mark Begich, D-Alaska. This bill, unlike the false notion of "universal background checks," will improve the current national instant background check system (NICS) by improving the records within it.

We know that NICS needs improvement. The Graham-Begich bill helps fix NICS by clearly spelling out the definition of who is a danger to themselves or others and should not have access to firearms, while protecting the rights of law abiding citizens. In particular, America's veterans should not be deprived of their Second Amendment rights based on a purely administrative finding that they need assistance in managing their financial affairs.

The bill also takes the important step of establishing clear circumstances for the reinstatement of gun ownership rights through judicial action or administrative processes at the federal or state level. If a person is still under any mandatory treatment for a mental disorder that makes him a danger to himself or others, the person would still be prohibited from possessing firearms.

Currently, 23 states submit little or no information on mental health adjudications into NICS. To address this inadequacy, Congress should continue working to improve the background check system by strengthening incentives for states to transmit these records. In addition, it should take steps to address our broken mental health system, ensure that violent criminals are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law and protect our children by improving school security.

The Graham-Begich bill is a step in the right direction towards fixing some of the deficiencies within NICS. Expanding NICS to include millions of additional law-abiding citizens without addressing fundamental problems in the current system will not.

It's Easy to Understand: Background Checks Save Lives

By Joshua Horwitz April 9, 2013, at 4:34 p.m.+ More

On October 21, 2012, Radcliffe Haughton killed three women, including his wife, Zina Haughton, and wounded four others at a Wisconsin day spa before turning his gun on himself. He purchased the handgun used in the shooting without a background check from a private seller he met through the website Armslist.com.

Two days earlier, Houghton had become the subject of a domestic violence restraining order that prohibited him from purchasing or possessing firearms. With the restraining order in place, he could not have purchased the weapon from a licensed dealer. Such dealers are required by law to conduct background checks on gun buyers.

It is patently clear that background checks save lives. Background checks conducted by federally licensed firearms dealers (FFLs) have prevented more than two million prohibited purchasers—convicted felons, wife beaters, and other dangerous individuals—from buying guns. Additionally, studies show that in the 14 states that currently require background checks for handgun sales, there are 49 percent fewer gun suicides, 38percent fewer women are shot to death by an intimate partner and the firearms trafficking rate is 48percent lower.

That's why more than 90 percent of Americans—and 74 percent of NRA members—support universal background checks.

Faced with the reality of that polling data, the NRA has concocted a boogeyman about universal background checks leading to a national registry of gun buyers and then forcible confiscation of privately-held firearms.

The problem is this claim is hogwash. New York Senator Chuck Schumer's Fix Gun Checks Act of 2013 would utilize a record-keeping system that's already been in place for 45 years (without any harm to gun buyers). Private sellers would conduct background checks through FFLs, who would then maintain paper records of these sales.

The federal government completely purges the information it receives from the dealer to run the background check after just 24 hours and the United States Code expressly prohibits the federal government from maintaining a national registry of gun owners. Moreover, the Supreme Court recently affirmed that there is a constitutional right to have a firearm in the home.

The NRA's conspiracy theory about "confiscation" deserves to be put in the same category as FEMA camps and black helicopters: Pure unadulterated fantasy. In the wake of the horrific tragedy at Newtown, Americans deserve a real debate on universal background checks, and an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor.

Should Self Driving Cars Be Made Available
to the General Public?

Self driving cars used to be thought of as something you only see in movies. Today, however, technological advances have made them more of a reality than a Hollywood fantasy. What are the benefits of a self driving car? Do they outweigh any potential negatives?

Read the text below then write an argumentative essay asserting whether or not self driving cars should become available to the general public. Use information from the text in your essay.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the text:

1. **Unbelievable Benefits And Drawbacks Of The Self-Driving Car**

As you read the text, think about which details you might use in your essay. Take notes on the details as you read.

After reading the text, create a plan for writing your essay. Think about what you know about the topic. Think about other information, details and examples that you may want to use. Plan how you will introduce the topic and think about the main ideas of the paragraphs in your essay.

Unbelievable Benefits And Drawbacks Of The Self-Driving Car

In today's ever more inter-connected world, it appears like technology has something to add to absolutely every industry. The same is true of transportation, with self-driving cars fast becoming a hot topic. The concept of self-driving cars has been around for years, but only recently have increasing advances in networking, satellites, and laser equipment made this dream a reality. Several companies have made major investments in the self-driving car market, but Google, Audi, BMW, and Hyundai are so far doing the most testing. On Google models for example, a complex overhead laser guidance system combines with real time satellite data to expertly guide the car under any condition. These advances mean that we may soon be able to sit back and relax the next time we leave the house, letting our car do all the work. While self-driving cars present many incredible advances for consumers, the safety requirements are particularly complicated and may present significant challenges to these cars being made available to the public.

Benefits

1. Nearly No Error
The incredibly complicated technology behind self-driving cars lets the on board computer make hundreds of calculations a second. These include how far you are from objects, current speed, behaviour of other cars, and location on the globe. These super accurate readings have virtually eliminated driving errors for test cars on the road, as the only accidents so far are while human drivers have been in control.

2. Eases Congestion
Because self-driving cars are rarely involved in accidents, their potential toease congestion is high. Not only that, because self-driving cars can communicate with each other, they would eliminate the need for traffic signals. By driving at a slower rate but with less stops, better coordinated traffic would lead to less congestion.

3. Eases Parking Woes
Because self-driving cars don't require a driver, they could alleviate parking concerns in highly populated areas. For example, a passenger could get out at their destination, and if no parking was available the car could circle the block until the passenger was ready to leave. Because the cars can coordinate traffic flow, this is expected to have little impact on traffic congestion. This may be a hugely useful aspect for drivers in large urban centres.

4. Potential For New Design
Because a vehicle may eventually function as a sort of self guided train car, the potential for new car designs is huge. With no need for complicated driving tools, self-driving cars could include new ways to relax or to stay entertained. The new design opportunities are not limited to the

interior however, and self-driving cars may soon look unrecognizable to cars today. Ultimately, some people think cars could become like a high tech living room you kick back in until you reach a destination.

5. Potential For More Powerful Vehicles

Because self-driving cars don't require a driver, technicians could potentially rearrange where on the car the various mechanical parts are stored. This may also lead to cars with more capable and powerful engines. With less driver errors, cars could eventually be capable of going much higher speeds.

Drawbacks

6. Expensive

Self-driving cars are so exciting because they are stuffed to the brim with space age technology, but all this technology is currently astronomically expensive. In general, technology grows cheaper the longer it is available to the public, so self-driving cars may eventually be something anyone can afford. For now however, most companies have not released a price for their driverless cars.

7. Potential For Technology To Go Wrong

Though successful programming lets us do incredible things, there is always the potential for some unexpected glitch to emerge. Even if a self-driving car performs flawlessly at first, it is possible for the programming that runs the cars to be updated by the car company with a fault string of code. Errors like this cause annoyance on our computers and mobile devices, but could potentially cause car accidents with self-driving cars.

8. Licensing Infrastructure Not Yet In Place

Self-driving cars also present a challenge for state and federal licensing infrastructure. The companies claim these cars are safe, yet it is up to public institutions to keep drivers safe. Not only do our local car licensing offices need to make sure these cars perform as advertised, they need to come up with a way to quickly and efficiently license and control them. Should our technology and hunger for these cars outpace our ability to investigate and approve them, public safety may be at risk.

9. Potential For Greater Pollution

While many companies are looking at self-driving cars that use fuel-efficient or hybrid models, should our access to self-driving cars outpace our commitment to clean energy, we may be looking at much more pollution. Getting out of your car at the front of the movie theater without needing to park sounds good in theory, but if the car you're driving isn't electric, emissions would be worse than leaving your car idling while you watch the movie.

10. Potential Loss Of Privacy
Finally, though the companies testing self-driving cars claim all pros and no cons, using a self-driving car means a third party would have the opportunity to track your movements. While many companies will likely avoid this due to consumer backlash, a massive loss of privacy still exists. Because your car would be receiving or communicating with data centers, your location would be potentially accessible to people or organizations who could hack into the network.

All in all, self-driving cars have the potential to be an incredible new wave in the future of humanity. Increased productivity, rest time, and possibly eliminating risk while driving, have the potential to greatly improve all of our lives. Should self-driving cars be available to the public before certain safety and privacy considerations are solved however, they may also present serious new complications for consumers. Regardless, self driving cars present a wide range of uses, and a mammoth new technological world.

Whether you love them or hate them, self-driving cars are a mind blowing emerging innovation that all of us should be watching carefully.

TECHNOLOGY BY ALICIA PRINCE
http://www.lifehack.org/author/alicia-prince

Should Community Colleges Be Free?

President Barak Obama proposed free community college. Some people hailed this as a wonderful idea while others felt that it will hurt not help community colleges and the students that attend them.

Weigh both sides of the claim, then write an argumentative essay supporting either side of whether or not community colleges should be free.   Be sure to use information from both texts in your essay.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the two texts:

1. **Free Tuition Is a Needless Windfall for Affluent Voters and State Institutions**
2. **Tennessee Is Showing How Free Tuition Community College Works**

As you read the texts, think about which details you might use in your essay. Take notes on the details as you read.

After reading the two texts, create a plan for writing your essay. Think about what you know about the topic. Think about other information, details and examples that you may want to use. Plan how you will introduce the topic and think about the main ideas of the paragraphs in your essay.

Free Tuition Is a Needless Windfall for Affluent Voters and State Institutions

Nothing in life is truly free — but don't tell that to dogmatic liberals and their pandering politicians, who would turn the first two years of college into a new universal entitlement. This idea has the same fatal flaws as universal pre-school: a needless windfall for affluent voters and state institutions that does very little to help the needy.

Start with the expense. Today, millions of families save their own pennies and dollars to pay for kids' college. While they would surely love to slough this burden onto taxpayers, doing so would probably shift billions of dollars a year from programs that help talented poor kids access higher education and improve our schools. In a time of scarce resources, why is this a priority?

Colleges seeking more public subsidy must stop admitting students who are unprepared academically and have virtually no shot at leaving with a real degree.

Nor would it help disadvantaged students. Most "free college" proposals focus on community colleges, turning them into "grades 13 and 14" of a new public-education system. Yet these schools have the worst track record with poor kids, especially those with exceptional academic promise. (They're also "free" to poor students today, thanks to federal Pell grants.) We know from a ton of research that these students do best at more challenging state schools and private colleges.

Yes, it might entice more students to enroll in the first place, as advocates claim. But is that a good thing? We know from multiple sources —including the National Assessment of Educational Progress — that just 40 percent of 12th graders are college-ready, even though nearly 70 percent already head straight into college. This is why more than half of those entering many colleges start in remedial courses — high school-level classes from which most will never escape. That's no good way to enter adulthood.

Far better to prepare more disadvantaged students to succeed in college by investing in K-12 reform (and targeted pre-K) while adopting the kinds of reforms set forth this week by Jeb Bush, such as giving students a line of credit while giving colleges' "skin in the game" via well-crafted income-based repayment plans. I would add one more: Colleges seeking more public subsidy must stop admitting students who are clearly unprepared academically and therefore have virtually no shot at leaving with a real degree or credentials.

Policymakers are right to address college affordability but let's make sure their "solutions" don't worsen today's acute college-completion crisis.

Tennessee Is Showing How Free Tuition Community College Works
Across Tennessee, several thousand volunteer mentors are in training to help almost 60,000 high school seniors take advantage of free community college through the Tennessee Promise. Programs like Tennessee Promise may be changing the conversation about going to college, and enticing students to try community college first.

The program, which is in its second year, offers some early lessons for similar proposals from the White House, presidential candidates and other states. Importantly, "free community college" is effective at getting more students into college, particularly when combined with mentoring. My colleague William Fox and I came to this conclusion when we studied Knox Achieves, an early model for Tennessee Promise.

Last fall, in the first year of the statewide program, freshmen enrollment rose 10 percent across Tennessee's two-year and four-year public college systems.

Returning mentors will tell you that the program's message is compelling: It transforms the way students view college and their place in it. The price of college is a critical piece of information for students who are unsure about going, and yet, it is a mystery until after admission and financial aid decisions are in, often late in their senior year (if they applied at all). Tennessee Promise eliminates that uncertainty with a blunt and simple message: Free tuition for high school graduates of any income and any aptitude. The state can secure that promise at relatively low cost: $1,020 per student this year. In a state where one in four under age 18 are in poverty, 45 percent of Tennessee Promise students are eligible for federal Pell grants that cover community college tuition and fees.

Other lessons from Tennessee's take on free college will take time to unfold. Programs like Promise may be changing the conversation about going to college, but the harder work begins when new college plans become reality. Tennessee Promise students enter a system where just 28 percent of first-year students graduate within 6 years of enrolling. Many require remedial courses to catch up to college-level work. Others, enticed by free tuition, are starting at a community college rather than a four-year university with hopes to transfer and eventually complete a bachelor's degree.

With tuition out of the equation and renewed interest in college, opportunities and challenges faced by Promise students at all degrees of readiness will be a clearer reflection of the broader education system, from kindergarten to college degree.

Should Marijuana Be Legalized?

The legalization of marijuana for both medical and recreational use has become a hot topic of debate. Proponents feel that legalizing marijuana will have a positive effect on society while opponents feel that marijuana is a dangerous drug and legalization will be harmful. Should marijuana be legal?

Weigh the claims on both sides, and then write an argumentative essay supporting either side of the debate in which you argue whether or not marijuana should be legal. Use information from both the text in your essay.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the text:

1. **Pros and Cons of Legalizing Recreational Marijuana**

As you read the text, think about which details you might use in your essay. Take notes on the details as you read.

After reading the text, create a plan for writing your essay. Think about what you know about the topic. Think about other information, details and examples that you may want to use. Plan how you will introduce the topic and think about the main ideas of the paragraphs in your essay.

Pros and Cons of Legalizing Recreational Marijuana
www.drugrehab.us

Legalized marijuana for recreational use is now a reality in states like Washington and Colorado. Voters in those states passed ballot initiatives to legalize the drug for recreational use. It's a move that has raised plenty of questions: How would decriminalization affect local government and law enforcement? Will it increase the rate of addiction to marijuana and other drugs? How does the legalization of recreational weed affect the addiction treatment community?

Legalizing Marijuana Pros
Revenue boost: As state and local governments struggle with rising costs and decreased revenue, many are looking for creative ways to increase income to pay for everything from road repairs to new parks. Some believe that marijuana legalization could be a windfall in the form of new taxes applied to its distribution and sale. In Colorado, for example, analysts suggest that taxing the drug could raise between $5 and $22 million annually.

More effective law enforcement and criminal justice: Many advocates for legalization note that by decriminalizing the substance, police officers will have more time and money to pursue criminals for other crimes, including those involving violence. They also argue it would create wiggle room in the criminal justice system, allowing prosecutors and judges to focus on violent crimes while freeing space in crowded prisons. One study estimates that nationwide marijuana legalization would save governments $8.7 billion each year.

Less money supporting organized crime: Legalizing recreational weed cuts off an important revenue stream for many in the illegal drug trade. Advocates of legalization contend that by making the substance less profitable for criminals, it will decrease the violence associated with the trade. The result could save lives while taking pressure off of law enforcement.

Safety controls: When a person buys marijuana off the street, there's no way to know exactly what dangerous substances are cut into the drug. While current legalization efforts don't directly address safety issues, they do create a framework for a safety control system, which would work to eliminate some of the risk that comes from smoking a substance potentially laced with toxic ingredients.

Wider access for medicinal use: Some people from inside and outside the medical community argue that the drug is an effective treatment for a range of conditions, including epilepsy, Crohn's disease, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and multiple sclerosis (MS). In more than a dozen states, including California, Massachusetts, and New Jersey, medical marijuana use is already legal under certain guidelines. The decriminalization of weed would allow more people to use the drug for its believed health benefits.

Legalizing Marijuana Cons
Addictive nature: Legal marijuana supporters have argued that it's not as addictive as other "harder" drugs, such as heroin and cocaine. Addiction treatment specialists, however, have seen firsthand that long term use does lead to marijuana addiction. Research suggests as many as 10% of users will develop dependence over time. As with other substances, stopping marijuana use

leads to withdrawal symptoms that range from irritability to anxiety. Opponents of legal recreational pot argue that any savings that would arise from legalization would be offset by the cost of treating the additional users who become addicted to marijuana.

Altered perception: Marijuana is a drug; and a drug, by definition, changes the way the body works. Marijuana users experience a high that alters the way they perceive things while under the influence. For example, low-to-moderate doses of the drug distort perception enough to trigger car accidents. One study showed that marijuana was the most prevalent illegal drug found in impaired or fatally injured drivers.

Gateway drug status: Many addiction treatment specialists believe marijuana is a gateway drug with the potential to introduce a user to more serious illegal substances, like cocaine or heroin. Research also suggests that its use may be linked to a higher risk of prescription drug use. A recent Yale University School of Medicine study revealed that teenage boys who abused alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana were 2 to 3 times more likely to abuse prescription drugs during young adulthood. Marijuana use alone was associated with increased prescription abuse in the teenage girls examined through the study. Legalization, then, could increase societal and financial costs for treating those who are introduced to heavier drugs by smoking marijuana.

Brain health: The jokes about pot users and their horrible memories are not an urban legend simply put forward by everyone from Hollywood movies to addiction treatment centers. For example, one study suggests the vessels in the brain of a marijuana smoker restrict blood flow, and continue to do so even after a month of abstinence.

Lung health: While tobacco has a bad reputation for pumping carcinogens into the lungs, marijuana is estimated to have levels of carcinogens that are 50-70% higher than tobacco smoke. The effect is amplified by the fact that many pot smokers inhale more deeply than cigarette smokers, increasing the amount of time the lungs are exposed to cancer-causing chemicals.

Heart health: Using marijuana raises the heart rate from 20% to 100% for up to 3 hours after it's been smoked. This increase boosts the risk of several problems including heart palpitations, arrhythmias, and heart attack. Its effect on the heart can make smoking the drug a high-risk activity for seniors or people living with cardiac conditions.

Mental health: Studies suggest a link between marijuana use and mental illnesses, like depression and schizophrenia. Researchers aren't yet sure if the marijuana triggers these conditions, or if smokers turn to the drug to self-mediate their symptoms. However, it is clear that marijuana use plays some role in the mental health picture.

The movement to legalize marijuana is becoming a reality in some areas. For local governments, law enforcement officials, the judicial system, and addiction treatment specialists affected by the shift, it will continue to be important to work together to create communities that are free from addiction-and its devastating emotional, physical, and financial effects.

Should States Ban Junk Food in Schools?

In response to rising obesity rates nationally, 16 states have recently adopted school nutrition policies. Such policies ban all junk food sales in schools. Proponents of the ban believe that school is where children spend most of their time, and it is where we lay the foundation for healthy habits. Opponents of the junk food ban believe that improving what we teach about nutrition and requiring more physical activity are better ways to approach obesity than imposing statewide junk-food bans.

Weigh the claims on both sides, and then write an argumentative essay supporting either side of the debate in which you argue whether or not there should be a ban on junk food in schools. Use information from both texts in your essay.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the text:

1. **Should states ban junk food in schools?**

As you read the text, think about which details you might use in your essay. Take notes on the details as you read.

After reading the text, create a plan for writing your essay. Think about what you know about the topic. Think about other information, details and examples that you may want to use. Plan how you will introduce the topic and think about the main ideas of the paragraphs in your essay.

Should states ban junk food in schools?

In response to rising obesity rates nationally, 16 states have recently adopted school nutrition policies
2006
Source: The New York Times Upfront

YES

America is facing a crisis because of our eating habits. Sixty million adults (20 percent of the population) are obese. Nearly 300,000 people die each year from complications associated with being obese or overweight.

Poor eating habits developed at an early age lead to a lifetime of real health consequences. School is where children spend most of their time, and it is where we lay the foundation for healthy habits. That's why New Jersey is the first state to adopt a comprehensive school nutrition policy that bans candy, soda, and other junk food.

If you go to school in New Jersey, your vending machines and school stores, along with the a la carte lines in your cafeterias, will no longer be able to sell snacks that are high in fat and loaded with sugar. Items that list sugar as the first ingredient will be eliminated and snacks will contain no more than eight grams of total fat and not more than two grams of saturated fat.

Soda and junk food will be replaced with more-nutritious alternatives. You will still have choices, but instead of candy or chips, you may have to decide between an apple or carrot sticks.

It has always been the role of government to help solve problems, including and especially health crises. Obesity is a health epidemic across our country, and we have a responsibility as a government and a society to do all we can to promote good nutrition and healthy eating so we can reverse this alarming trend.

New Jersey is proud to be the first in the nation to adopt a statewide school junk-food ban, and we hope other states follow our lead.

—**Richard J. Codey**
Acting Governor of New Jersey

NO

It may make sense for a school board to ban junk foods in some cases, but there are several issues that should be considered.

To begin with, there is the problem of defining junk food. Are we talking about potato chips, soda, and pastries? What about fried chicken fingers, cheeseburgers, and pizza— foods many school cafeterias serve?

Second, the American education system is designed to give communities control over their schools through local school boards. This principle of local control lies at the root of our democracy. We believe that locally elected school board members are in the best position to make policy decisions that reflect the opinions and needs of their individual communities. Any decisions about what is sold in school vending machines should be determined at this level.

Third, an important part of education is learning to make good choices. An across-the-board junk-food ban does not teach young people how to make healthy choices; it simply removes some of their options.

Fourth, improving what we teach about nutrition and requiring more physical activity are better ways to approach obesity than imposing statewide junk-food bans.

Let me be clear: We believe that childhood obesity is a very serious issue, and principals, teachers, parents, students, and school boards should be doing their part to address this situation. But banning junk food without other strategies and local decision-making is a superficial remedy that dilutes personal and local responsibilities.

— **John Dively, Executive Director,**
Illinois Principals Association

Source: http://www.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=10853

Is Social Networking Harmful to Children?

Social networking is not just for adults anymore. Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are just a few social networking sites that today's youth use to communicate with each other. Although these sites, and others like them, have age restrictions, young children often lie about their age to register on these sites. This leads to the question is social networking harmful to children?

Weigh the claims on both sides, and then write an argumentative essay supporting whether or not social networking is harmful to children. Use information from the text in your essay.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the text:

1. **SOCIAL NETWORKING: ADVANTAGES VS. ADDICTIONS**

As you read the text, think about which details you might use in your essay. Take notes on the details as you read.

After reading the text, create a plan for writing your essay. Think about what you know about the topic. Think about other information, details and examples that you may want to use. Plan how you will introduce the topic and think about the main ideas of the paragraphs in your essay.

SOCIAL NETWORKING: ADVANTAGES VS. ADDICTIONS

The rise of the internet age has enabled us to live a life at a faster pace. Because of the freedom the web provides, millions of people can communicate at the same time. Never before in human history has there been a time like this. What's most intriguing about this revolution is that children and teens are leading the way.

The younger section of society comprised of children, pre-teens and teens accounts for a very large portion of the internet populace. The same group also accounts for the most rapid increase in internet use. And when this group stays online, the most common thing they do is join social networking sites. In fact, for an average American teen, social networking is basically the same as social media – it absolutely defines how and where teens get to communicate and socialize with other people.

But the ongoing popularity (or maybe dependence) on the internet and social networking carries not only positive but also negative effects. First, we have to consider that the web is responsible for making media, society, and our lives in general work faster. A fast paced society has its ups and downs and the way it affects children and teens is two-fold – on one hand, social media makes life easier and more convenient, but it also puts traditional relationships in a new and sometimes distorted light.

For instance, children and teens are supposed to learn how to build relationships with other people around the neighborhood or in school. Traditionally, they have been taught by their parents, religious ministers, guidance counselors, and teachers to respect authority and follow what older people say. Furthermore, they are also taught to earn friends by means of showing respect and practicing good manners. Our point here is that building quality relationships with people takes time and effort.

But because of social networking, real and hard-earned relationships are now replaced with online relationships. Many youths are leaning towards communicating with other people through social media rather than going out in person and making friends with neighbors. What this means is that they are fond of making life faster. But the question is: is this good for them?

Let us find out…

Social Networking/Media Effects: Positive

1. Better information and knowledge access – people who have a childhood and adolescent life minus the internet are faced with the difficulty of getting access to vital information and knowledge they need for education. This means that when you need to do research on something, you have to spend tons of effort and go miles in order to find books, periodicals, and other paper sources just to get started. Additionally, you may also need to conduct interviews and surveys so as to get more information about a certain issue you're tackling.

But with the birth of the internet, every single bit of information or knowledge a child or teen needs to learn is compiled in a very large library called the World Wide Web. With social networking, research is a thousand times easier and getting the information you want may be done in minutes.

2. Interactive involvement - Long ago, most children and teens were limited to joining community, neighborhood, and school groups. They were not that exposed to events and happenings outside their community. But with social networking and the internet in general, correspondence to virtually anyone from anywhere is possible.

Interactive involvement even reaches as far putting children and teens under the spotlight for discussing and participating in online and social networking forums for issues that concern them.
3.   Improved world awareness – It is quite usual to think that children and teens are not that keen to knowing issues that shape the world. Politics, social problems, population, health, and the economy are things that the younger populace lacks interest in. But because of social networking, they have no choice but to face the world's problems and share their opinions. The good thing about this is that their voices are given weight in issues where adults are traditionally the prominent protagonists.
Social Networking/Media Effects: Negative

1.   Encourages exploitation and abuse – We all know that social networking is a product of technology and technology brings new kinds of crime. While many people use it for wholesome, ethical, and healthy reasons, there are also many who utilize it to abuse and exploit others, particularly children and teens. The convenience brought by the web has led criminals to understand that carrying out their trade is much easier and less risky online. The use of fake identities is one advantage these people have in order to be more confident in exploiting and abusing children.
2.   Behavioral tendencies and consequences – The impact of social media and social networking sites on the behavior of children and teens is very disturbing. We're not saying that social media is bad in and of itself. The misuse of such technology is what makes it bad. For instance, there is the tendency to conform to what's popular without considering whether it's right or wrong - as often seen in cases of cyberbullying. It's much easier for young people to verbally abuse each other online than it is face to face.
3.   Health conditions – Social media is responsible for revolutionizing traditional communication. However, research has shown that social networking sites can be very addictive. People who use social networking sites for their daily communication are hooked to a point that they neglect health responsibilities, especially their diet. The addictive nature of social media leads to eating disorders, obesity, heart problems, sleep disorders, and other pertinent health issues. Additionally, constant exposure to the internet because of social networking addiction prevents a child or teen from engaging in physical activities and socialization. They become so dependent on it that they start to think making contact with other people outside the social network is not necessary. As such, they become socially and physically stagnant.
In actuality, there are more consequences that we have to face as parents when it comes to social media and networking issues. We have to understand that even though that there's no stopping our children from using them, it's possible to maintain control. Trying to force a child to stop using social networking sites will probably not work too well, but a parent that is lovingly and constantly involved in their child's life will have a much better time keeping watch over their online activity. Through this active monitoring, one can at least limit the negative effects.

Tablets vs. Textbooks – What Should Be Considered?

Give any child a mobile device and they quickly become adept at using it. Swipes and pinches are words they are very comfortable with. However, is that reason enough to replace textbooks with tablets? What factors should a school district take into account when considering the move from textbooks to tablets?

Read the text below then write an informational essay detailing what factors a school district should consider when deciding to implement a tablet program. Use information from the text in your essay.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the text:

1. **The Bull's Eye - Tablet vs. Textbook**

As you read the text, think about which details you might use in your essay. Take notes on the details as you read.

After reading the text, create a plan for writing your essay. Think about what you know about the topic. Think about other information, details and examples that you may want to use. Plan how you will introduce the topic and think about the main ideas of the paragraphs in your essay.

The Bull's Eye - Tablet vs. Textbook

Yusheng Xia, Assistant Editorial Editor, May 22, 2013

With the invention of tablets came a new generation of textbooks crammed into a single system called the e-textbook. This simple technology is perfect for schools as it provides students with advanced ways of learning. Offering benefits that highly outweigh the costs, tablets should replace textbooks because it will take our education system a huge step forward in the endeavor for student success.

Prudently spending money to purchase classroom materials has always been a challenge for school districts. However, recent statistics on school budgeting show that tablets are a viable solution for this issue, as they are both a smarter and cheaper alternative to regular textbooks. According to a report from the Federal Communications Commission, school districts spend an average of $8 billion per year on textbooks. Because such a large amount of money is needed to replace textbooks, schools often keep the same materials for several years, resulting in textbooks that contain outdated information.

On the other hand, course materials in tablets can be instantly updated with the latest textbook editions, providing students with up-to-date information at all times. The price of purchasing online textbooks is cheaper compared to buying the hard-covered versions.

In addition, with the large number of classes that students take, carrying around a different textbook for each class can hurt…literally. While doctors recommend that people should carry a maximum of 15% of their body weight, books for the four to five academic subjects exceed that limit. This results in over 13,000 backpack-related injuries a year for kids between the ages of 5 to 12. Tablets, on the other hand, weigh only about one to two pounds, yet are able to store thousands of information for numerous courses.

Tablets also come with features that regular textbooks don't have, such as temporarily highlighting phrases, looking up unfamiliar words, and saving important information. This makes the tablet an effective device for students who find it boring and difficult learning with a regular textbook.

Schools should incorporate tablets as a part of the everyday learning experience as technology continues to advance. In the 21st century, it is essential that all young people have a fundamental knowledge of using electronic devices, as future jobs will require people highly accustomed to such skills. Learning to use tablets from a young age will not only encourage children to pursue a career in the field of electronics, but will also prepare them for the highly advanced digital world that we live in today.

As a country, we are given the opportunity to transform our schools in a way that will greatly benefit our students. This opportunity cannot go to waste. Replacing textbooks with tablets is a key change that will surely enhance a student's way of learning, as well as develop a well-equipped generation of undergraduates ready to make a difference in the world.

Joy Chow, News Editor, May 22, 2013

The satisfaction of slamming a textbook shut after completing an assignment and letting out a huge sigh of relief, to me, cannot be replaced by a tablet. What can I do to express my frustration on a tablet? What can I do to release all of the pressure bubbling inside of me while I work? It won't help me much to poke a tablet screen in an angry rage –the fulfilling effect is just not there.

In addition to these objections associated with using a tablet, studies have shown that people using printed textbooks actually extract more from the content in front of them than those who use tablets. With textbooks, a visual placement of information is presented. Unlike on a tablet, using a textbook is straightforward and simple, especially for people more comfortable with user-friendly items. For instance, if I need to find a certain page, I can quickly flip or skip over sections of the book to get to my desired destination. If I need to highlight, annotate, or circle different words to help me adequately absorb information, it's easy to grab a pen or pencil nearby and make notes. With a tablet, however, I cannot fulfill my needs to learn to the highest capacity possible. I cannot be as efficient as I want to be. Just to mark something, I would have to change tools, maybe even change tabs – I'd definitely lose my train of thought. Endless scrolling can be tiring, slow, and heavy on the eyes. Plus, words on a tablet have different sizes and fonts that take away from the overall learning experience of an individual read important content.

Some may argue that tablets are convenient and portable and make accomplishing tasks easy. Though this may be somewhat true, the temptation of surfing the Internet and drifting away from the actual purpose of taking the tablet along with you in the first place, almost always prevails. I cannot speak for every human being, but I know that for most teenagers like myself, having an electronic device right there in front of you, in your hands, inevitably leads to procrastination. Simply put, tablet = distraction = procrastination = failure to get things done.

Now that we're done discussing the hypothetical issues at hand, we can take a step back to visualize the realistic picture. Integrating tablets into classrooms along by training staff members to utilize the new technology is more costly than beneficial. As our universe becomes more and more acquainted with new uses of technology, these supposedly useful devices that are meant to serve as convenient resources in life can turn out to be curses disguised as blessings. Printed textbooks cannot and will not freeze or crash; they are also less susceptible to causing dry, irritated eyes as might tablets. The implementation of tablets as our main learning resource will only induce more complications. Printed textbooks are ultimately the way to go–it's easy and purposeful, so let's not change what already works perfectly for us.

http://dbbullseye.com/2013/pro-tablet-vs-textbook/

Year Round School – Is that the Answer?

Year-round school schedules are subject to considerable debate among both proponents and critics. Advocates of year-round schools cite increased performance because students have less time to forget important learning material than they might during a longer summer break. Opponents claim decreased family time and difficulty scheduling child-care as reasons to avoid year-round schedules.

Weigh the claims on both sides, and then write an argumentative essay supporting either side of the debate in which you argue whether or not there should be year-round school schedules. Use information from the text in your essay.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the the text:

1. **Should there be a Year Round Schedule for Schools ?**

As you read the texts, think about which details you might use in your essay. Take notes on the details as you read.

After reading the two texts, create a plan for writing your essay. Think about what you know about the topic. Think about other information, details and examples that you may want to use. Plan how you will introduce the topic and think about the main ideas of the paragraphs in your essay.

Should there be a Year Round Schedule for Schools ?

More Frequent Breaks
There are both advantages and disadvantages to having frequent breaks throughout the year. Year-round school allows students to be engaged in their learning for the majority of the year. Although year-round schedules vary from school to school, most students attend classes for 2-3 months at a time, and then have between one and three weeks off before starting the cycle again, according to the National Education Association. Frequent breaks might be a great option for students and teachers to re-energize and recharge. However, they might also cause scheduling problems in families with other children in schools with a different schedule or for those struggling to secure child care for the short breaks throughout the year.

Effects on Budget
Advocates claim a year-round calendar allows school facilities to be used most effectively because they are not sitting empty for months at a time during summer break. Families' budgets might benefit from the reduced costs associated with being be able to travel in off-season times. However, the frequent breaks might force parents to take frequent time off work, line up potentially expensive short-term childcare solutions or even leave children alone in the home while they work. Older students might suffer financially if they would normally secure full-time summer employment during a traditional summer break.

Absences and Burnout
A year-round schedule might reduce absences because the frequently scheduled breaks allow for sick or exhausted teachers and students to recover and recuperate before returning to school. Both teachers and students might feel less burnout when they get more extended time off throughout the year. However, others might become overwhelmed with the seemingly endless cycle of year-round school or struggle with focus each time classes resume after a short break.

Academic Achievement
A year-round schedule might make it easier for students to access tutoring, particularly economically disadvantaged students, the California Department of Education reports. Students are also less likely to forget material over a short break than they might be over the traditional summer vacation. However, there is no guarantee of improved academic achievement, as Paul von Hippel, researcher and sociologist at Ohio State University discovered. Teachers might not

have as much time to access continuing education courses in a year-round calendar. Those students who would normally benefit from summer school might miss out on remedial or supplemental classes.

http://education.seattlepi.com/yearround-school-advantages-disadvantages-2521.html

Should the Legal Drinking Age Be Lowered?

All 50 US states have set their minimum drinking age to 21 although exceptions do exist on a state-by-state basis for consumption at home, under adult supervision, for medical necessity, and other reasons.

Proponents of lowering the minimum legal drinking age (MLDA) from 21 argue that it has not stopped teen drinking, and has instead pushed underage binge drinking into private and less controlled environments, leading to more health and life-endangering behavior by teens.

Opponents of lowering the MLDA argue that teens have not yet reached an age where they can handle alcohol responsibly, and thus are more likely to harm or even kill themselves and others by drinking prior to 21. They contend that traffic fatalities decreased when the MLDA increased.

Weigh the claims on both sides, and then write an argumentative essay supporting either side of the debate in which you argue whether or not the drinking age should be lowered. Use information from the text in your essay.

Before you begin planning and writing, read the the text:

1. *"Raising the Drinking Age to 21 Has Been a Disastrous 30-Year Experiment"*
2. *"Why 21? Addressing Underage Drinking" and "Myths and Facts about the 21 Minimum Drinking Age"*

As you read the texts, think about which details you might use in your essay. Take notes on the details as you read.

After reading the two texts, create a plan for writing your essay. Think about what you know about the topic. Think about other information, details and examples that you may want to

use. Plan how you will introduce the topic and think about the main ideas of the paragraphs in your essay.

Should the Drinking Age be Lowered?

"Raising the Drinking Age to 21 Has Been a Disastrous 30-Year Experiment"
S. Georgia Nugent, PhD, Interim President of Wooster College, in a Feb. 10, 2015 New York Times article .

"As a former college president, I have joined with many of my colleagues to advocate lowering the minimum drinking age from 21 to 18, because we believe the 21-year-old limit has created, rather than solved, problems. America's earlier experiment with prohibition was a notorious failure. Yet in 1984, America again enacted prohibition on a more limited scale, becoming one of only a handful of nations in the world with a minimum drinking age of 21. I believe that our 30 years of experience with prohibition for young people has been a serious failure as well.

There are a number of arguments against the 21-year minimum age. Foremost, in my mind, is the dramatic rise in binge drinking among young people since the 1984 change — with its consequent danger to health and safety. When it is legal for an 18-year-old to drive, marry or serve in the military but illegal for him or her to drink a beer, the illogic of the situation is patent. As a result, the overwhelming response of young people has been, not compliance, but contempt for the law. By outlawing moderate use of alcohol in appropriate social contexts and with adult oversight, we have driven more drinking underground, where it has taken the very dangerous form of 'pre-gaming.' The 'under-age' drinker, no longer permitted the occasional beer during a dance party, is now more likely to chug high-octane alcohol in dangerous quantities before heading off to that party. As a result, alcohol use has become more, not less, dangerous."

"Why 21? Addressing Underage Drinking" and "Myths and Facts about the 21 Minimum Drinking Age"
Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) webpage on www.madd.org (accessed Jan. 26, 2016)

"Why do we make young people wait until 21 to drink alcohol?
Many activities have ages of initiation... The age limit for alcohol is based on research which shows that young people react differently to alcohol. Teens get drunk twice as fast as adults, but have more trouble knowing when to stop. Teens naturally overdo it and binge more often than adults. Enforcing the legal drinking age of 21 reduces traffic crashes, protects young people's maturing brains, and keeps young people safer overall.

Can't parents teach their teens how to drink alcohol responsibly by giving them small amounts—under supervision—before they reach 21?
Some states permit parents to do this with their own child, but there's no evidence that this approach actually works. As matter of fact, there is evidence to contrary. When teens feel they have their parents' approval to drink, they do it more and more often when they are not with their parents. When parents have concrete, enforced rules about alcohol, young people binge drink less.

Would lowering the legal drinking age make alcohol less of a big deal, and less attractive to teens?
History says no. When states had lower legal drinking ages in the U.S., the underage drinking problem was worse. For example, before the 21 minimum legal drinking age was implemented by all states, underage drunk drivers were involved in over twice as many fatal traffic crashes as today.

I thought Europeans have fewer underage drinking problems … is it because their kids drink from an earlier age?
That's a myth. European countries have worse problems than America does, as far as binge drinking and drinking to intoxication. Studies show that Europe has more underage drunkenness, injury, rape, and school problems due to alcohol. Since alcohol is more available there, it actually increases the proportion of kids who drink in Europe.

Drinking is just a phase all kids go through; they'll grow out of it.
Actually, many don't. In fact, the earlier someone begins drinking, the more likely they are to be alcohol dependent in later life. More than 40 percent of individuals who start drinking before the age of 13 will develop alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence at some point in their lives. Ninety-five percent of the 14 million people who are alcohol dependent began drinking before the legal age of 21."

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