

EDUCATIONAL LETTER

DEBATING IN THE CLASSROOM

OPEN UP!
DEBATE
POLARIZATION



international debate
education association

INTRODUCTION

The International Debate Education Association (IDEA) is proud to present this educational letter which was created by Erasmus Plus and the program “dialogue and connection” of the city of Amsterdam.

IDEA hopes this educational letter will encourage constructive debates in your classroom so that we can find answers on polarization in our society. Polarization is a theme that you have most likely been confronted with on a regular basis in your classroom. We hope we can contribute to critical thinking, listening to different perspectives on the same theme and open discussions in which nobody's opinion is being neglected. We hope this educational letter will make all young people verbally resilient and that they learn how to give others space to reply, so that the most feasible solution to a problem can arise.

IDEA wants to support you as a teacher with this educational letter based on one-minute movies that are about youngsters in The Pijp district (Amsterdam), in Kiel (Antwerp) and other cities in Europe. All the young people make a significant ‘point’, which has been taken as starting points. For each movie, you will find a ‘debate statement’ and some pro-and-con arguments. Per statement/video, we offer you an inspiring exercise. This allows you to practice the skills of debating in the classroom. Each exercise ends with a debate or dialogue.

This educational letter is part of the series lesson plans ‘Debate in the classroom’ that IDEA has recently developed. You can also order it via info@idebate.nl. We are very excited about the hand-outs. More content will be created over the next few months.

IDEA also offers training courses for teachers to learn how to implement the educational letter in their lessons. The courses also serve to inspire one and other. If you are interested, please send an email to info@idebate.nl.

Good luck and have fun with it!

Yvonne Heselmans,
Executive Director

Kosovare Duraku
Junior project office



Erasmus+

✕ Gemeente
✕ Amsterdam

THE IMPORTANCE OF DEBATING EDUCATION

The Netherlands is a multicultural country, yet there is a feeling of discomfort where young people are often the ones who suffer. This is the cause for plenty of misunderstanding between the young and the old, natives and immigrants, etc. Many young people of North-African origin are often addressed or looked down upon when there are discussions on jihadists or radicalization, which further accumulates the neglect from society. The feeling of rootlessness and exclusion is hereby created. This can cause an increasing amount of anxiety and tension in some areas. Reading through the comment section of social media is enough to figure out that mistrust and fear currently predominate within the society.

Then there is the gap between the 'Dutch' professionals (civil servants and politicians) and the multicultural group of young people. Many young people with a non-Dutch background feel discriminated against and find it difficult to express their voice. They also encounter difficulties as a citizen participating in the city of Amsterdam (or the Dutch society in general). Because there is a larger emphasis on differences, rather than similarities, young people continue feel less connected to Amsterdam and The Netherlands.

The educational letter is offered as a response to polarization. When young people learn to debate, they also learn to think critically, they will be more empowered and sensitive topics will be more discussable. That is how we can tackle polarization and fear. Young people are the future and they have the right to develop themselves as respectable citizens of Amsterdam and The Netherlands.

Debate in the classroom in corporation with the Navigators Academy

This lesson scheme is part of the project 'Debating in classrooms'. The project has offered hand-outs to teachers to help stimulate more debating in the classrooms, with easy resources, techniques and information.

This lesson scheme is – like other educational schemes -not by itself. It is part of the Navigators project. The Navigators project started in 2015 and offered seven motivated young people a year-long opportunity to connect through conversation, dialogue and debate and social cohesion among the residents of Amsterdam with diverse cultural backgrounds. By 2016 we started with a new group of young people. Young people involved in that project are in the middle of society, they are diverse (in terms of training, cultural background, gender) and studying or working in various industries. With the Navigators project, they are able to find and create connection between the differences in Amsterdam, which we have translated into an attractive lesson scheme. The young people on the YouTube videos that you will use in your classroom are all trained by Navigators.

The Debate in the classroom lessons will provide debate exercises around objectives and are based on the short portraits of the young people from the neighborhoods of Amsterdam. IDEA will also be an extra link to this training for trainers so that teachers in Amsterdam can be reinforced to debate on difficult cultural themes and continue the debate education in the classroom and in the school. This process is regulated by IDEA, but of course in consultation with the navigators. This educational route for schools will also deliver additional growth for dialogue days and makes the spin-off of the project more lightweight and stronger and through an efficient way.

The problem

Polarization is increasing in our society. This means contradictions between groups in society are sharpened, which can cause tensions between groups and eventually increase segregation. Debate education can solve these problems. As mentioned before, young people learn to listen to others who do not share the same thoughts as them and they learn to listen carefully and in a critical way. The Navigators also participated in our project Debate in the classroom. They organised dialogue days where they discussed themes such as polarization, which resulted in making this educational letter. Other youngsters, like volunteers from Combiwel, youth worker Achmed Filali (among others), IDEA's staff, its volunteers and journalist Thom Calhoun contributed to this educational letter as well.

In house training at IDEA

The educational letter offers two complete lesson of 45 minutes. There are multiple exercises you can do which means you will always have a new, fun and engaging way to teach the skills of debating to your students. Some exercises are linked to one-minute key messages, which can be found via this link: www.openupconnect.org.

Please contact us at info@idebate.nl if you want to learn more about:

- **Proactive approach;**
- **How to give young people more strength in society;**
- **Opportunities for public debate;**
- **How to give a speech or how to strengthen critical thinking;**

Visit the following websites for more information: www.idebate.org www.openupconnect.org

Facebook: Navigators Academy, International Debate Education Association

LESSON 1:

THE OBJECTIVE UNDERSTANDING OF ISSUES LIKE DIVISION IN SOCIETY

INVESTIGATING AND BRAINSTORMING ABOUT STATEMENTS

The main goal of this lesson is to make youngsters more resilient and to educate them how to think critically. These skills will eventually prevent them from making irrational choices in the long term.

10 minutes: introduction to debating: what is debating?

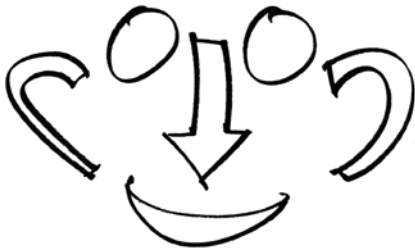
EXERCISE PURPOSE:

to make young people understand the difference between a debate and a discussion

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TEACHER:

5 minutes: exercise:

Split the class in four small groups and put some tables together.



You may start with a question such as ‘what do you think debating is?’. Let your students think of an answer themselves and give them some time to think about this. Hand out a large sheet of paper and some crayons. Ask each group to draw an egg on the sheet of paper and then ask them to draw a face in the egg. Continue to ask your students to relate all facial features they have drawn to debating. Examples: you use your mouth to speak, you use your ears to listen et cetera. When they are done drawing, each group will be asked to present their drawing.

5 minutes: discussing the assignment afterwards

- Eyes:** when debating, there are always two parties, one opposes and one agrees with what is being said. Discussion are vaguer.
- Nose:** when debating, your nose should point to the ones you wish to convince of your arguments. This can be a third party. In most cases, it is the third party who determines who had the strongest arguments. A third party could be a jury in a debate tournament but when thinking of a third party, you can also think of voters who listen to a political debate. This makes the difference between a debate and a discussion clear: when debating, you try to convince a third party. When discussing, you are trying to convince your opponent.
- Mouth:** when debating, your mouth is used to talk.
- Ears:** when debating, your ears should be used to listen carefully to what the other has to say. This allows you to think critically
- Brains:** Your brains should be used to reason in a logical way.

As mentioned before, debating is different from discussing. Debate is important in a democracy. Why? Because it gives people the confidence and belief that they can actively participate in society and state their opinion. Debating teaches people to express their views in a constructive way and respect those who have different views. Debating teaches people to structure their arguments. It also teaches you to think in a logic way and to move away from emotions. All of these skills are not only useful but also important in a democracy.

10 minutes: Teacher explains how to come up with strong arguments with the help of SEI

GOAL:

help students understand how a strong argument is built with the help of SEI

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TEACHER:

Explain the SEI model to your students. The SEI model teaches that a good argument consists of three parts:

- S = Statement
- Ex = Explanation
- I = Illustration (illustration as example, facts, evidence)

If you want to convince others that you are right, you must come up with more than just one argument. Explaining and examples help a lot as well. You should also always explain your argument and give an illustration to make things clearer.

5 minutes: PIZZA / BURGER debate

GOAL OF THIS EXERCISE:

The main goal here is to show that every single person debates in everyday activities. You show your students that they are already capable of debating.

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS:

Set your students up in groups of two. Tell one of them to defend that pizza is the most delicious food and tell the other one to defend that a burger is more delicious.

Start with the pizza lovers: it is up to them to convince the burger lovers in one minute that pizza is the most delicious food. Then it is the burger fans' turn: they also get one minute to convince the pizza lovers that it is burgers that are the best.

If you want to have more variety in this exercise, you can tell the pizza lovers to back up their statements with arguments and vice versa.

The exercise can be ended by asking your class: 'How did you feel about debating about pizzas and burgers?'

15 minutes: pro and counter arguments (YouTube statements)

Ask your students to think and come up with pro and counter arguments on the key messages from the YouTube videos. Your students must use the SEI model when forming their pro and counter arguments.

SEI MODEL EXPLAINED SHORTLY:

- Start your argument with a statement; this is the core of your argument. With this, you try to make a point.
- Then the explanation follows. You need to ask yourself: 'why?'. If your students have mastered this, you can ask them to go deeper and ask questions such as: 'why is your statement true and why is your statement important?'
- An illustration is then necessary. This can be anything: an example, facts, statistics, theories et cetera. You could give your students a few moments to do a bit of research on the statement they have to debate about.

Watch the short clip of Thalita with your students.

You can find it on www.openupconnect.nl or you can simply click on this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL9OmP7GM0G5c0MBGKL-qbz57PcCV8ZpW1>

When the video is finished, write Thalita's key message on your chalkboard and again make small groups of two. Ask the groups to come up with both pro and counter arguments.

TIPS FOR THE TEACHER:

Stay engaged and keep asking questions such as:

- Why?
- Is this even important/relevant? If so, why?
- Can you give an example?
- Could you link your example to the point you are trying to make?

THALITA'S STATEMENT:

It is wrong to judge people based on their appearance.

EXAMPLE PRO ARGUMENTS

It is plain wrong to judge someone based on their appearance. The first impression someone makes does not say everything. You should always give someone a chance to show you who they really are. Take Thalita: as she said, you may think she is selfish based on how she looks, but if you give it a fair chance to get to know her, you might find out that your first impression of her was wrong.

Another pro argument to this statement is that 'it is not good to label people'.

EXAMPLE COUNTER ARGUMENTS

You need to listen to your intuition. You only have one chance to make a first impression. I would rather come up to somebody and talk to them if they look friendly and nice then to somebody who looks arrogant because those people look very uninviting.

Etc.

5 minutes: end the lesson by introducing next week's theme 'And now it is time to debate for real'.

LESSON 2:

APPLYING THE LEARNED SKILLS

THE DEBATING STARTS!

GOAL OF THE LESSON:

Practicing and debating for real

5 minutes

Briefly repeat what was discussed in the previous lesson and shortly explain again the difference between a debate and a discussion. Explain in short how the SEI model works.

10 minutes exercise: chain debate

GOAL OF THIS EXERCISE:

Goal of this exercise is to teach students how to build an argument. They also learn to listen to others and summarize what their opponent has said.

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS:

Step 1:

Look and listen to Samer's with your students. His video can also be found on www.openup-connect.nl. You can also find it via this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL9OmP7GM0G5c0MBGKL-qbz57PcCV8ZpW1>

Write Samer's statement on your chalkboard and challenge your students to find pro and counter arguments.

STATEMENT SAMER:

If you owe more material stuff or money than another, it does not mean you are more worth than the other.

EXAMPLE PRO ARGUMENTS

Money does not make you happy. You may owe more money than other people but other factors in life have can influence on your happiness. The fact that you owe or make more money also does not mean you are a better person.

Example: Yasmina is a millionaire but also unhappy. She works very hard to earn the money she does but that means she does not have any free time to spend with friends or family.

Owning more material stuff or more money will not make you a better person. The value of people should not be determined on how much the owe. It should be determined on how they treat others.

Example: Lisa is very rich but also arrogant. She treats poorer people as if they are less.

EXAMPLE COUNTER ARGUMENTS

Rich people are more popular because other people will want to hang around with you more. Money opens doors: you will have more opportunities in life when you have more money. Having more money makes you more likeable, since people know you have more to offer than the average person.

Example: Ahmed has a lot of money and is not afraid to show it. Therefore, he is more popular and has more friends.

Money makes life allot easier. With money, you can do more things you enjoy. To be happy, it is important to do the things you like and enjoy.

Example: John has a good job and earns a good amount of money with it. He often goes on luxurious vacations and practice his hobbies. All these things make John very happy.

Step 2:

Make your students stand up and form two rows. Make sure every student has another student standing next to them and tell everyone to take one step back, so they face each other. One row has to agree with Samer's statement and the other row has to oppose.

P P P P P P P P P P Pro

C C C C C C C C C C Con

The row that opposes, is the row that start their arguments against the statement. They have one minute to explain why they share the opinion that Samer is wrong. They should start their sentences with 'I am against the idea that... because...'. Make sure they support their arguments well and according to the SExI model.

Then the row that agrees with the statement has one minute to explain why they agree with Samer. They should start their sentences with 'I am against the idea that... because...'. Make sure they support their arguments well and according to the SExI model.

Make sure both rows have exactly one minute to argument to the person on the opposite of them.

Step 3:

Encourage your students to do the following:

The opposing students start stating their arguments. Challenge them to make their arguments stronger than the ones before. Then it is up to those who agree with the statement to summarize what their opponents had said and afterwards they state their own arguments.

Step 4:

Ask your students the following questions:

- What went well, what did you find difficult?
- What did you learn about the importance of listening?
- Have you noticed how important it is to build your argument properly?

TIPS FOR THE TEACHER:

It might scare your students when everyone starts talking at the same time but make sure you tell your students beforehand that this is all part of debating. They have to learn to focus on their opponent and their opponent only. Encourage your students while they are stating their arguments. Make sure they hold on to the SExI model.

15 minutes exercise**GOAL OF THE EXERCISE:**

- Students practice how to build arguments.
- Students learn to listen to each other's arguments.
- Students practice giving counterarguments.

Step 1

Look up Nassim's video on www.openupconnect.nl or click on this link: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL9OmP7GM0G5c0MBGKL-qbz57PcCV8ZpW1>

STATEMENT NASSIM:

Every person is equal

Step 2

Give your students time to come up with arguments.

EXAMPLE PRO ARGUMENTS

Our constitution states that every person is equal. Therefore, it is not allowed by law to treat people unequally. Similar cases deserve a similar treatment. This prevents discrimination.

Example: it is not allowed to not hire someone for a job based on their background.

We are all made out of flesh and blood and therefore equal. Someone's background, sexual orientation, religion, gender or skin color should not matter.

EXAMPLE COUNTER ARGUMENTS

Equality does not exist. Every person is unique and therefore different. Some people owe more money or have a better life than another person.

Example: Zubeyde lives in a poor neighborhood in San Diego and earns less than half the money her colleague Eric does. Eric lives in an upstate neighborhood. Zubeyde and Eric are therefore not equal.'

It is not fair to treat people equally. Some people may need social welfare, others may not. The circumstances of each and every person are different: they all lead a different life and have different needs.

Step 3:

Write down Nassim's statement on the chalkboard.

Step 4:

- Ask your students to put their tables on one side of the classroom. Put four pages on the floor, each page has one argument: two on the left (against the statement) and two on the right (pro statement). Make sure there is enough space in between them.
- Ask your students to walk around and read all four arguments on the pages. Ask them to stand by the page with the argument that appeals to them the most.
- Ask all four groups to talk with each other about why they have chosen the argument they chose.
- Ask them to give examples and ask them to constantly use the SExI model when forming their arguments.
- A debate will follow naturally.

10 minutes: exercise

GOAL OF THIS EXERCISE:

Making your own arguments using the SExI-model

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS:

Look up Marwan's short video on www.openupconnect.nl on or click on this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL9 OmP7GM0G5c0MBGKL-qbz57PcCV8ZpW1>

MARWAN'S STATEMENT:

Role models and youth organizations should be supported in their struggle against the radicalizing of young people.

EXAMPLE PRO ARGUMENTS

The fight against violent radicalization is important. Role models inspire young people to get on the right path and youth organizations can organize fun activities to prevent radicalization among young people. The more young people involved in society, the less likely that youngsters will be radicalized.

Example: Volkert always felt very lonely and isolated. He is doing worse and worse in school every day and he is on the edge of dropping out. Then, a dialogue evening is organized in his neighborhood. His uncle, who was involved in organizing the evening, insists he comes. To please his uncle, he decides to come. The evening changes his outlook on life. Things at school start to change for the better and he has made himself new friends.

EXAMPLE COUNTER ARGUMENTS

Students who threaten to radicalize, may not trust organizations funded by the government. Although it is well-intended, it may have the opposite effect and cause even more radicalization.

Example: Lisa is addicted to drugs and has had multiple encounters with the police. She even had to appear in court because she was suspected of dealing drugs. The court found Lisa to be innocent, however, the damage was already done: Lisa has mistrusted the government ever since. Lisa may be reluctant to participate in projects that are funded by the government.

- Put all the tables the side of the classroom so your students will have enough room to move around. Make your students form a circle.
- Place seven sheets on the floor, number them from one to seven and ask your students to stand behind the number they feel represents their opinion most. Number one stands for fully agreeing with the statement and seven stands for fully opposing the statement.
- Ask your students why they stand where they stand using the questions the SEI model asks us: 'Why? Can you give us an example?'
- By now your students should be ready for deeper questions like: 'Is what you are saying even true? Is it factual right? Is it even something wrong? What kind of solution do you offer?'

ADVICE:

make sure there is enough room in the classroom.

15 minutes: exercise House of Commons debate

GOAL OF THE EXERCISE:

- Students experience what it means to debate in a disciplined setting;
- Students will be able to bring all the theory they have learned into practice.
- Students learn to stand up for their opinions.
- Students learn how to listen to others.
- Students learn what it is like to judge.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TEACHER:

Step 1

Check out Anwar's short video on www.openupconnect.nl or via this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL9OmP7GM0G5c0MBGKL-qbz57PcCV8ZpW1>

- Write Anwar's statement on the chalkboard.
- Then divide your students into three groups.
- Two groups proceed to stand in a row facing each other, the third group is the jury.
- Explain to your class what the House of Commons debate is. It is derived from the British parliament but of course with less rules.

TIP

to make it more interactive, let the jury make up their own rules!

THE REGULAR RULES ARE:

- You talk to your opponents with respect.
- You listen to each other.
- Arguments should be built from the SEI model.
- You should be able to summarize what the other has said and then state your own arguments.

A debate usually takes about five to ten minutes. After it ends, it is up to the jury to decide which team has won and why. Talk about the debate, what arguments have been used et cetera afterwards and involve the jury as well.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS:

Tell the jury briefly what is important to look for when deciding who wins the debate. While debating, you as a teacher need to make sure nobody is interrupting anyone and that people are being treated with respect. As mentioned before, the jury can make up their own rules.

10 minutes: making an ladder of arguments

GOAL OF THIS EXERCISE:

Goal of this exercise is to learn students how to make a series of arguments that relate to each other. It is important they keep asking themselves 'WHY?'. Logical statements follow when students use arguments and sub-arguments.

TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS:

Print the ladder (see Appendix 2) and give one to each student.. Make up a statement and ask your students to fill in the rest of the ladder.•

AGAINST:

Equality does not exist. Every person is unique and therefore different. One person earns or has more possessions than another (more money, more food, more clothes, a better house), and another can be smarter than another.

AGAINST:

It is not fair to forget the differences there are between people: a rich person for example does not need any social welfare funded by the government but a poor person does. The circumstances of people differ because they have a different life, making their needs also different.

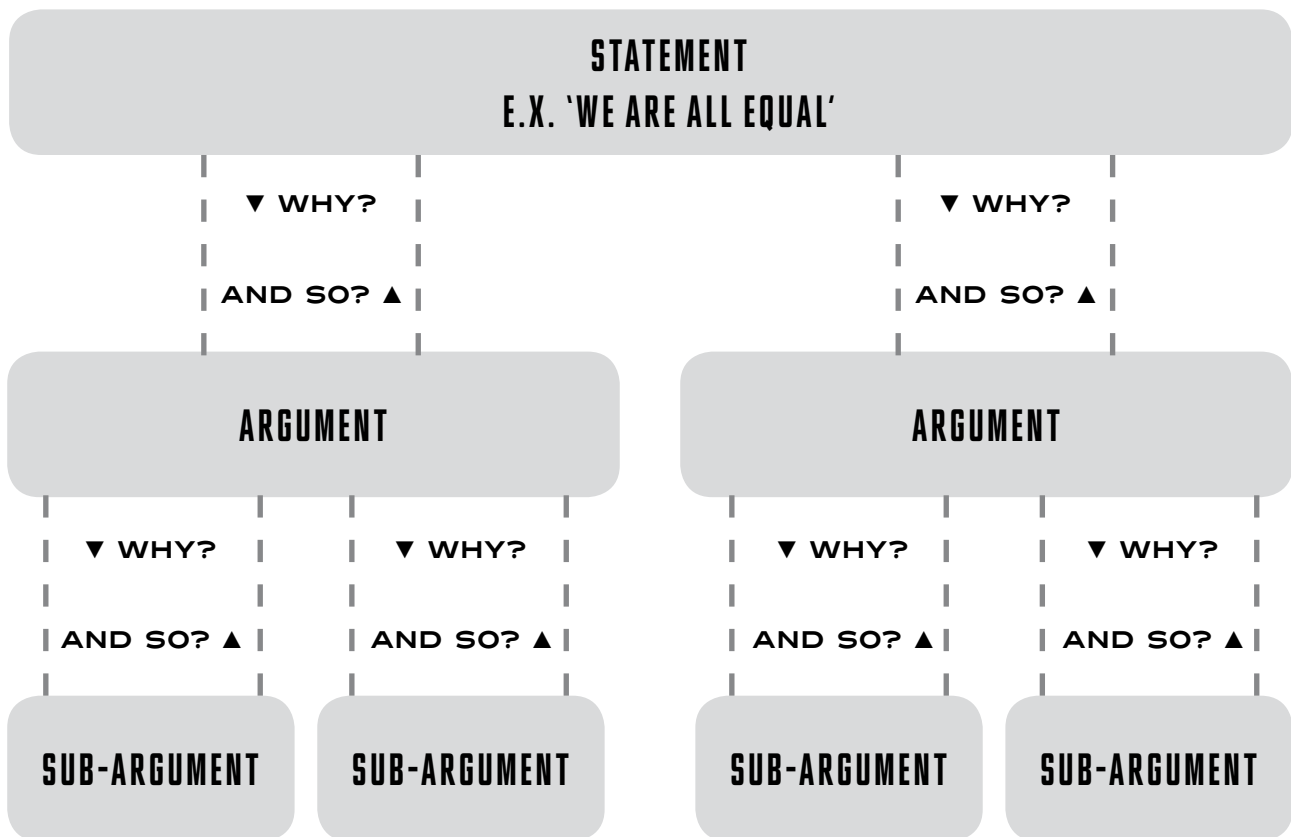
PRO:

Our constitution states that everyone is equal. It is not allowed to treat people differently. This prevents discrimination.

PRO:

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APPENDIX 2; LADDER OF ARGUMENTS



add another layer of sub-argument(s) if you notice your students have advanced.

ATTACHMENT 3; ALL STATEMENTS AND ARGUMENTS

The short videos can be found

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EXAMPLE COUNTER ARGUMENTS

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For more key messages, please visit our Open Up website! www.openupconnect.org



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