Chapter 4: Investigating Public Issues of Global Importance

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This chapter looks at the how of teaching and learning public issues of global importance, beginning with a rationale for powerful pedagogies designed to make the issues meaningful and memorable. Following this will be descriptions of two powerful pedagogies that model authentic investigation of public issues in a democratic pluralistic context.

A Plea for Powerful Pedagogy: The Promise of Co-operative Learning

Co-operative learning is a form of group work that is structured so people learn from each other. There are many versions of this teaching model but they share the following elements.

- **Positive Interdependence.** Interdependence is structured to foster co-operation within the groups. Students need to have a reason for working together. Group tasks are co-operative when they structure positive interdependence among group members: a “sink or swim together” feeling and commitment to the group goal. Positive interdependence is considered the key attribute of classroom co-operation (Deutsch, 1949). It can take many forms. Successful democracies are by definition co-operative since conflicts are resolved under the assumption that we are all working towards the good of the society as a whole, even if we disagree, sometimes strongly, on the means to promote such good.

- **Individual Responsibility and Accountability.** Group goals are best achieved when every group member fulfills his or her role and contributes to the effort and product. Strategies in which individual as well as group efforts are recognized, such as individual quizzes based on the work done in a group or self-evaluation of one’s efforts while working on a group task, also promote individual accountability.

- **Student-Student Interaction.** Co-operative groups are not students sitting beside each other doing their own thing. Students in small groups must interact in a meaningful way, usually through purposeful talk.

- **Suitable Task.** Tasks in which you want purposeful talk are best done when students work together in small groups. These include:
  - Tasks involving exploratory talk:
  - Tasks involving checking for understanding:
  - Tasks involving problem-solving and/or decision-making:
Tasks in which a variety of abilities are required:
Tasks involving review of previously encountered ideas or material:
Tasks in which students reflect on their efforts and results in a lesson.

Other important conditions shared by many co-operative approaches include:

- Frequent use of heterogeneous groups so that different interests, backgrounds, expertise, and perceptions can be combined to tackle social issues.
- Teaching and practice of group behaviours so that students are prepared to work together.
- Reflecting on the process and product of the group activity so that students learn from their efforts and improve performance in future.
- Group tasks in which many students are working simultaneously.

Whenever we interact with others, our behaviour is changed for better or worse. Co-operative learning researchers are interested in promoting the “better” of group or societal interaction. The research base for co-operative learning is among the most impressive for any educational innovation. Nearly a thousand studies going back more than a century have demonstrated the power of co-operative learning to promote academic achievement, especially when group goals and individual accountability are at the forefront. Depending on the co-operative approach used, the outcomes for which achievement is positively affected range from simple mastery to complex thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making. On the one hand, it can be used to raise awareness of the role Canadian individuals and organizations play in overseas relief and development assistance initiatives; on the other hand, it can be used to encourage youth to think critically about international issues such as peace building and conflict resolution or HIV/AIDS.

In the area of non-academic outcomes, important in citizenship education, co-operative group approaches seem to have universally positive effects. For example, in a Toronto study, grade 5 and 6 classes composed of recent European and West Indian immigrants and Anglo-Canadians learned social studies using a co-operative technique called Jigsaw II. In addition to greater achievement and time on-task for students in the treatment groups, more cross-ethnic friendships were established. The growth in such friendships, both close and casual, lasted after the treatment was concluded according to a follow-up ten weeks later (Zeigler, 1981).

While many co-operative learning approaches are used for content mastery, there are several which have as their purpose the investigation of complex and often contentious public issues. This chapter reports on two of these approaches: Academic Controversy and Complex Instruction.
Strategy 1: Using Academic Controversy to Investigate “Does the world need an international body for resolving global issues?”
Reflections on the Strategy Applied

Traditional debates are fun and many students like their competitive nature, but many other students do not fully participate because they are afraid of being put down. Academic (sometimes called “Creative”) Controversy (Johnson & Johnson, 1995) appeals to both groups of students. Moreover, by striving for the best argument, rather than victory, Academic Controversy promotes rigorous, powerful learning and a deep understanding of important issues: key elements of citizenship in any democracy.

The strategy was used deep into a grade 10 Open Civics course. In this course students learn about democracy and the meaning of democratic citizenship in their neighbourhood, in Canada, and in the world. They learn about social change and decision-making processes in Canada. In addition, students learn to explore their own and others’ beliefs and perspectives on civics questions by thinking and acting critically as well as creatively about public issues.

The Academic Controversy served as the final culminating activity of Unit 3 The Global Citizen: A World View. Students used the knowledge and skills learned, developed, and extended in the course to be active global citizens engaged in an authentic debate about the effectiveness of the United Nations as an international body for resolving global issues.

The tasks used throughout the course (available on request from the authors) were designed to help this diverse group of learners gain the needed expectations for engaging in the controversy. These tasks included completing a “News Inquiry Exercise,” a “Civics Portfolio,” and a “United Nations/Iraq clipping file” for the Academic Controversy that related respectively to Canada, the war going on in Iraq, and the United Nations’ role in the situation. Overlap was encouraged so that students could read the articles about Canada, Iraq, and the United Nations to include as part of their Civics Portfolios in addition to being a source of information to prepare for the Academic Controversy.

As Civics is an Open-level course, each class is typically quite diverse. Our two Civics classes were no different. Therefore, it was necessary to provide the students with a brief overview of the situation in Iraq. Students completed the handout “Canada and Iraq 1990-1999”—an excerpt from War and Peacekeeping, by Jenifer. Borda. (Borda, 2002). This excerpt provided a simple outline of events from the Gulf War enabling the students to place the current news in an historical context.

In this class the students sit in co-operative groups of four. Co-operative learning is used systemically, so by the time we reached the Academic Controversy, the students were completely used to working in groups. Positive interdependence, individual responsibility and accountability, and student-student interaction are classroom norms. The teacher had changed the seating plan once, so the students had worked together for about two months. Due to absences, one or two of the groups were re-jigged, however, this minor alteration
did not pose a problem because the students are used to being put into groups and working with a wide variety of people.

In the class before beginning the Academic Controversy, the assignment was reviewed which gave students an opportunity to discuss it in their groups. After a brief discussion to clarify instructions, we proceeded to do a “practice” run using a simple controversy: “Be it resolved that all vehicles should be red.” The student was instructed to have all the necessary materials out—assignment sheet, paper, pen, etc. They completed the practice run very successfully. At the end of the practice, we reflected on the process as well as the content. We discussed what the academic controversy structure accomplishes and how it is helpful to really evaluate an issue. A couple of students expressed discomfort. We then talked about change and how it affects us – sometimes it takes a little time to feel comfortable when doing something new.

The actual day of the Academic Controversy ran very smoothly. The students knew what to do and did it. Students commented at the end of the class that it was “neat,” a “good way of looking at things.” The students did complete a team assessment sheet and a two-line reflection indicating what they felt they did well, and what they needed to improve. This information needs to be compiled for further analysis.

How well did we attain our desired expectations? We did cover this topic/issue at the beginning of the course. We had some senior students do a 30-hour famine presentation (the students donated money) and we examined the issue of the soon-to-be-extinct Spirit Bear in northern BC. Simon Jackson, a remarkable 21 year old came and spoke to the students, who then wrote a letter to the premier of B.C. to save the Spirit Bear from extinction. Due to time constraints, we were unable to extend our conclusions from the controversy into specific actions. In future, students would be encouraged to write another to a person of his/her choice about the conclusions s/he reached at the end of the Academic Controversy. For instance students could make their beliefs known by writing a letter to editor, United Nations, MP, MPP, etc.

**Learning Expectations**

- Develop an understanding of the international conflict.

- Demonstrate an ability to research questions about the conflict, and to think critically about them.

- Demonstrate an ability to apply decision-making and conflict-resolution procedures and skills to cases of civic importance.

- Demonstrate an ability to collaborate effectively when participating in group inquiries.

- Analyze one’s rights and responsibilities as a global citizen in times of international crisis and what it means to be a citizen within a global context.
• Compare and evaluate the impact of various types of civic participation in resolving issues of global importance.

**Preparation**
Each student located a total of four sources, one of which was a text source; the rest could be Internet sources. Students used the Toronto District School Board’s *Student Research Guide* to document sources and take comprehensive notes, synthesizing them into coherent themes and arguments. The students were encouraged to collaborate and share information as they realized that they were going to have to argue both sides. Due to time constraints, the teacher allowed the students to “share” the fourth source—a source from another person. This worked well because the students exchanged articles and began actively seeking to acquire additional information. In addition, the students began to evaluate their sources. They compared information and discussed the value of different sources. In particular, we concentrated on determining the various points of view represented and made an effort to evaluate facts and how they were utilized with certain points of view. A formal evaluation of sources would be a welcome step, but time did not permit a formal full lesson to do so.

**Steps at a Glance**

**Step 1: Identification of the Controversy**
- The controversy is stated in positive terms. Example: “Be it resolved that all vehicles should be RED.”

- *Our controversy:* “Be it resolved that the world needs an international body for resolving global issues.”

- Note: You will be exploring both sides of the issue, so it does not matter what side you are on initially.

**Step 2: Groups of Four**
- The teacher will letter the students: AA/BB and assign PRO/CON positions.

- The A’s sit on one side, the B’s on the other. A’s are PRO first; B’s are CON first.

- Students number off as A1, A2 and B1, B2. This enables the teacher to tell which person starts the discussions. Example: The teacher will call out “A1” or “B2” to start the discussion.

**Step 3: Time to Plan**
- You will be given time in the library and time in class to research and plan your arguments, both PRO and CON.

**Step 4: Time for Each Group to Share**
- Sixty to 90 seconds is given to each side to present their position, either PRO or CON.
• PRO presents first; the CON side demonstrates attentive listening by taking notes. NO ONE SHOULD BE INTERRUPTING.

• Reverse. CON side presents; PRO side demonstrates attentive listening by taking notes. NO ONE SHOULD BE INTERRUPTING.

**Step 5: Plan the Rebuttal**

• Students are given time to withdraw from the group in pairs and discuss what they consider flaws in the other group’s presentation. In order to do this effectively, students must have actively listened to what the other group presented.

**Step 6: Present the Rebuttal**

• In this step, B’s begin, then A’s. The teacher will identify which student begins. Students will have approximately 60 to 90 seconds.

**Step 7: Flip and Repeat Steps 3 to 6**

• Students stand up and change seats to begin the process debating the other side of the issue. Example: student who begins the Academic controversy as A1 - PRO becomes B1 – CON.

**Step 8: End with a Round Robin Discussion**

• At this point in the Academic Controversy, students share with their group where they stand on the issue. The steps are diagrammed below:

1. **Identification of the controversy**
2. **Groups of four**
3. **Time to Plan**
4. **Time for Each Group to Share**
   - **PRO**: A, A
   - **CON**: B, B

5. **Plan the Rebuttal**
6. **Present the Rebuttal**
7. **Now Flip and Repeat steps 3 to 6.**
   - **CON**: A, A
   - **PRO**: B, B

8. **End with a Round Robin discussion**
   (striving for the best resolution)
   - A, A
   - B, B

Evaluation: Rubric for Assessing Academic Controversy
Unit III – Demonstration – Academic Controversy
Grade 10 Civics CHV2O

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
<th>Level 4</th>
<th>Level 3</th>
<th>Level 2</th>
<th>Level 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THINKING/ INQUIRY</td>
<td>Draws 3-4 sources, both text and Internet; takes comprehensive notes and synthesizes them into coherent themes and arguments</td>
<td>Draws 2-3 sources, both text and Internet; takes substantial notes and relates them to position.</td>
<td>Draws from 2-3 sources; takes adequate notes and relates them to position.</td>
<td>Draws from only one source; takes sparse and sketchy notes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNOWLEDGE</td>
<td>Demonstrates wide range of knowledge, clear understanding; presents 6 or more points, each with two or more pieces of supporting evidence.</td>
<td>Demonstrates solid understanding of subject matter; presents 5 or more points, each with at least one piece of supporting evidence.</td>
<td>Demonstrates basic familiarity with subject matter, presents 3-4 points, each with at least one piece of supporting evidence.</td>
<td>Demonstrates little of no grasp of subject matter; presents 1-2 arguments with little or no supporting evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocating Own Position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPLICATION</td>
<td>Fully, forcefully, and completely presents the points and arguments made by the other side; captures emotional tone and underlying needs as well as facts.</td>
<td>Presents most of the points and arguments made by the other side; captures emotional tone and underlying needs as well as facts.</td>
<td>Presents at least half of the points and arguments made by the other side; shows some understanding of the emotional tone and underlying needs.</td>
<td>Recalls and presents little or nothing of substance or tone of the other side’s presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocating Other Position</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMUNICATION</td>
<td>States ideas and opinions clearly, firmly and respectfully; refrains from blaming, accusing, and put downs; shares the floor.</td>
<td>States ideas and opinions clearly, firmly and respectfully; mostly refrains from blaming, accusing, and put downs; shares the floor.</td>
<td>Usually states ideas and feelings clearly, firmly, and respectfully; mostly refrains from blaming, accusing and put downs, shares the floor.</td>
<td>Is withdrawn or unfriendly, uses blaming language and put downs; monopolizes the floor or says very little.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertive Speaking Skills</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>COMMUNICATION</td>
<td>Shows consistent attentiveness, calm and courtesy; never interrupts; asks clarifying questions and paraphrases extensively</td>
<td>Is attentive and clam most of the time; interrupts rarely; paraphrases and asks clarifying questions often.</td>
<td>Maintains attentive demeanour most of the time; interrupts sometimes; occasionally asks clarifying questions and paraphrases.</td>
<td>Interrupts often; appears inattentive; asks few or no questions; seldom or never paraphrases or reflects feelings; responds with apathy or hostility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active Listening Skills</td>
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Student reflection:

One thing I did well is . . .

One thing I need to improve is . . .
Strategy 2: Using Complex Instruction to Investigate "The Politics of Food"

Reflections on the Strategy Applied

Complex Instruction (Cohen, 1994) suggests that co-operation is inhibited by status differences among group members. Status—expectations of competency based on real or imagined academic ability, social popularity, sex, ethnicity, or fluency in the language of instruction—may establish a pecking order within a group. As a result, those who have higher status may dominate group discussion and not value the contributions of low status group members. The resulting unequal effort to the group goal may result in unequal learning opportunities to achieve.

In this era of performance-based assessment, working with students who differ in background, motivation, facility in the language of instruction, levels of thinking, social skills, and the like can make inquiry difficult to do.

Status differences among students need to be treated for non-academic reasons as well. Allport’s *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954) presented a contact hypothesis whereby prejudice is reduced by equal-status contact of groups seeking common goals.

Complex Instruction (or Multiple Ability Treatment) originated in the bilingual and multiethnic classrooms of California’s elementary and middle schools in the early 1980s. It was designed to help small groups work more productively for all group members by dealing with status: differing expectations of competency. These differing expectations may prevent the operation of positive interdependence and individual accountability required to make groups truly co-operative.

*Complex Instruction/Multiple Abilities approach has the following features:*

1. Team-building to develop group skills.

2. Explicit establishment of a group norm that says that everyone will be good at something while no-one will be good at everything. This norm is reinforced throughout group activities, often through positive, public, and specific feedback to low-status group members who demonstrate competence.

3. Tasks which are “rich” in that they require students to demonstrate creative, musical, artistic, and spatial as well as logical, reading, and writing abilities: e.g., problem-solving, model making, and dramatic demonstration. Cohen has suggested that inquiry-based tasks need to be challenging, complex, and multifaceted so that while all group members have some ability to contribute to the task, no group member has all of the necessary abilities. Gardner’s multiple intelligence framework (1983) is used to design appropriate tasks and evaluation strategies.

4. The assignment of roles to ensure that multiple abilities are performed within a group.
5. The wrap-up after the activity gives feedback on the multiple abilities that were demonstrated by students, with low-status members often doing the demonstrating. Teachers are instructed to give immediate, specific, and public feedback during and after group activities to low status members. When high status members view the teacher’s feedback, they may adapt the teacher’s perceptions of their group mates’ abilities, allow them to participate more fully in the work resulting in more equitable learning results.

In our project, a history teacher collaborating with a teacher librarian used a combination of co-operative approaches to prepare the diverse range of students in her senior Canadian and World Issues geography class. Students worked together on a culminating performance task dealing with issues around world hunger as part of a Resource Management unit: The task for this unit was the creation of an infomercial dealing with the politics of world hunger. The preparation and the teaching of the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind leading to the infomercial tasks took classes over a 12-day period.

Some of the challenges that we faced in the design of the strategy:

- We spent a lot of time grouping the students according to their strengths and weaknesses in terms of Multiple Intelligences, as we were trying to develop the groups by way of a balance.

- We spent a lot of time and energy figuring out age-appropriate team-building activities; finding timelines of each class as the stages of the project progressed; and finding adequate space for co-operative learning, teambuilding, and video production.

Some of the challenges that we faced in the implementation of the strategy:

- Having the right technology (i.e., video cameras, tapes, editing machines, etc.), having enough technology so that more than one group could work on their videos at a time, having technology that actually worked, having the expertise to teach the students how to use it and fix things when they were not working, having the opportunity to sign out equipment that was shared throughout the school.

- We needed large areas, as well as separate areas for the students to work.

- Getting the students to buy into public praise, either listening to it, reacting/responding to it and giving it to other students.

Meeting the learning expectations:

- We felt the strategy that we used definitely allowed us to enable students to meet the learning expectations of the assignment (“The Politics of Food”), before we started we looked at the Ministry expectations for this unit and integrated them into the unit, most of the students successfully met these learning expectations.
Changes if we were to use the strategy again:

- We would want the students to already be practicing/participating in public praise.

- We would want the students to be aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, and be able to identify them.

- We would want the students to have already participated in team-building and Multiple Intelligence activities.

- Learning log/progress log—students would fill this in after each class so that we could track their progress, and so they could always have a realistic idea in terms of timelines and a daily reminder of due dates.

- Try to develop a backup plan in case the technology failed us.

Cautions/suggestions:

- Make sure that your students are sensitive to public praise environments, this is something that needs to be fostered and explained on an ongoing basis.

- That the infomercial didn’t necessarily need to be completed on video (the students could always act it out in front of the class).

Key Learning Expectations

- Analyze the causes and effects of economic disparities around the world.

- Analyze selected global trends and evaluate their effects on people and environments at the local, national, and global level.

- Research, evaluate, and report the effectiveness of methods used by different organizations, governments, and industries to find short, and long-term solutions to geographic problems and issues at the local, national, and global level.

Steps at a Glance

The following steps highlight the many subtasks leading to the major assessment. These are organized around the key components of Complex Instruction. Further details can be obtained from the authors.

Step 1: Orientation

This involved the following:

- Use of a Multiple Intelligences (MI) test.

- Discussion of MI theory and its relevance in this unit with students.

- Rationale to students regarding the nature and purpose of the CIDA project.
• Forming the students according to MI strengths and weaknesses and sharing their strategy in creating the groups.

**Step 2: Easing into Complex Instruction and the “Multiple Abilities Treatment”**

• A number of “class builders” and “team-builders” based on the co-operative structures of Kagan (1992) and the Tribes approach of Gibbs (2000).

• Ensuring that the team builders were connected to the content—for example, the class constructed a mind-map of the “Myths of Hunger” on the third day of this unit.

• Public praise for all the mind maps created, for the explanations provided by students, for information gathered by students, and for the sharing of information, specifically focusing on the contributions of the low-status students.

• Assessment in the form of a reflection—students were to write a one-page response on 8 of the 12 myths of hunger

• Continued work on trust-building and practice in group inquiry.

• Public praise, continuous assessment, and tasks connected to Multiple Intelligences occurred throughout the unit.

**Step 3: Introduction of the Culminating Task**

• After being introduced to the major assignment students brainstormed the purpose of an infomercial as well as ideas for the group’s infomercial [ideas for scrip (including solutions), props, sound, music and images].

• Students discussed questions in their groups and sought clarification from group members. The teachers provided any necessary clarification.

• The “Assessment” section on the assignment page was discussed thoroughly by teachers. This included the performance rubric that set the standard for the performance.

• Daily individual research time in which students were given class time to research the characteristics assigned to them by their groups in respect to their group’s chosen region/country.

• Team Statement/Reflection in which group members came up with two positive statements about the lesson and a comment about their chosen region/country.

• Students were divided into pairs and assigned to read either the World Food Programme web site (http://www.wfp.org/) or a case study in their text on various solutions to world hunger.
Students divided up research responsibilities in order to complete parts of their proposal. Time in the school library was put aside for this.

Instruction on Script Writing

Dress rehearsal occurred on Day 10 in which students practiced their scripts and began filming their infomercials. On Day 12 groups presented their infomercials to class. Students were assigned individually, by teachers, to peer evaluate 2 infomercials (see Peer Evaluation).

Students handed in their answers to “Politics of Food - Unit Summary.” Their two-page Personal Action Response was due the following period. Public praise had been prepared for each student in advance. This included a positive comment highlighting the student’s contribution to their group during the unit, as well as a positive comment highlighting the student’s contribution to their group’s infomercial (final product). This praise was written on chart paper and displayed while the teachers read it out loud.

Complementary Resources and Strategies

It seems clear to us that the following supports can apply to both strategies. Additional support materials produced for the project are available from the authors.

Developing Media Literacy

A media study is one way of teaching students how to interpret current events. Here are two approaches.

1. Target Day: Using Newspapers on the Internet

The culminating task in this unit focuses on current events. The following activity will help to prepare students for the challenge of this task.

Target Day is a skills-based current events lesson using the Internet. Students need access to computers and should know how to search for specific information on the Web. The online version of this lesson plan can be completed in one period (seventy-five minutes), including the research.

Procedure

- Set a Target Day. This could be a day picked at random or a day centred on a specific event, such as an election.

- Organize the class into equal-sized groups of three or four students.
• Have students participate in a random draw to select online versions of one of the following newspapers. (Teachers may be familiar with other online newspapers that they may wish to add to this list.):
  ⇒ Vancouver Sun
  ⇒ Calgary Sun
  ⇒ Leader-Post (Regina)
  ⇒ Winnipeg Free Press
  ⇒ Toronto Star
  ⇒ Gazette (Montreal)
  ⇒ Chronicle-Herald (Halifax)
  ⇒ Telegram (St. John’s)

• Working together as a class, have students create a list of categories to serve as a basis for comparing the newspapers. Categories should include similarities, differences, and biases; students may want to include other categories as well. Ask students to predict the degree of comparison they expect to find among the newspapers across the country, using a scale of 1 (totally different) to 10 (identical). Ask students to justify their predictions.

• Have students locate the home page of their online newspapers. After skimming the page, have them answer the following questions:
  ⇒ What are the main stories featured on the home page?
  ⇒ How many stories are local? provincial? national? international?
  ⇒ How many stories are about politics?

• Ask students to record their answers to the above questions either on chart paper or on the chalkboard so that the class can compare and contrast newspapers using the categories students created. Students should use the 1 to 10 scale to judge the degree of comparison. When they have evaluated all of the newspapers, have them compare the results to their original predictions and note whether their predictions were accurate or inaccurate. Invite students to try to explain any differences.

*Extensions/Follow-up*

Teachers may want to extend this task by having students explore their online newspapers to find specific political stories. When groups using different newspapers find common stories, ask them to extend their comparisons by answering the following questions:
• Which facts does each newspaper use to express its point of view?
• Do the papers use the same or different facts?
• What might explain any differences?

*A Non-Internet Version*

If students do not have ready access to computers, teachers could have them write letters to the newspapers listed above requesting a copy of their paper for a specific date. This could take time since students must wait for all of the papers to arrive before they can
begin their task. Alternatively, in some communities, students may be able to obtain a variety of newspapers through a local store or newsagent.

2. Preparing a Clipping Thesis
Putting together a “clipping thesis” will also help students prepare for the culminating task. (Alternatively, this activity could be incorporated into the performance task, with the final results to be displayed or submitted for evaluation.)

Procedure
- Ask students, either individually, in small groups, or as a class, to select one current issue in Canada that they would like to investigate further.

- Have them collect newspaper clippings and record information about a topic that they find in Unit Six or Unit Seven of the textbook. The clippings can be formally presented in a portfolio or used as source citations in an essay. Allow students three to four weeks to complete this part of the activity.

- Have students write an essay analyzing the issue they have chosen. Their analysis should include the following:
  - historical background on the issue (as reported both in the newspaper and in the student text)
  - the newspapers’ perspectives
  - a weighing of the different perspectives in order to arrive at a defensible conclusion about the issue
Civics Portfolio: Civics in Everyday Life

Civics Portfolio – Civics in Everyday Life Culminating Activity Date________________

As part of this term’s work, you are responsible for gathering and organizing a portfolio of news stories from this term (February 3– May 8, 2003) that connect with themes and ideas in units in your civics course. This work will account for 30% of the final mark in the course.

You also will be responsible for analyzing and responding to the issues discussed in these articles.

Your teacher will give you the due date for this assignment as well as the evaluation rubric later this month. Your civics portfolio will include the following:

(a) A title page with the assignment title, your name, your teacher’s name and the date due.
(b) A table of contents to articles, summaries, and responses with page numbers.
(c) At least three complete articles related to each unit for a total of nine articles. Each article should be neatly clipped and mounted to a page.

Instructions:

Articles must be from at least two different news sources. Each article must be at least 20 column inches in length and be identified by date and source. (e.g. Toronto Star, April 21, 2003.)

Students will complete a “Civics Portfolio – Article Analysis Sheet” for each article.

1. In the first “box” students will record and define important and unfamiliar vocabulary.
2. In the second “box,” students will summarize the article in point form. A summary must answer the following general questions:
   - Who is involved in this news story?
   - What is the main point/message of this article?
   - What has/is/going to happen?
   - Where did this take place?
   - When did this story take place?
3. In the third “box,” students will identify two significant points of view and the students’ point of view on the topic.
4. In the fourth “box,” students will explain how the main idea or point of view of the article is related to the unit of study with quotes and vocabulary used in the article. (50 words minimum)

(d) A written section of responses, also with quotes and vocabulary from the article (75 words minimum) to each of the following questions:
1. Which article provoked the greatest emotional response from you? What response and why?
2. Which other article was the best written? Explain why, using at least three reasons.
3. Which other article left you with unanswered questions? What were they (at least five)?
4. Which other article left you with questions specifically for the author? What questions would you ask him/her (at least five)?
5. Which other article would you recommend for use in the Civics course? Explain why, using at least three reasons.

The following rules will apply about sources:

1. You may use three downloads or printouts from an approved news web site or e-library database.
2. You may not use photocopies.
3. All articles must be from the dates indicated above from at least two different news sources.
4. Assignments should be mounted neatly in an 8 ½” x 11” binder or 8 ½” x 11” scrapbook.
Civics Portfolio – Civics in Everyday Life continued . . .

Studentship in this Assignment: (How to do well on this assignment):
1. Start early and gather a variety of possible articles. You will be asked to collect three articles for each month from February to May, a total of 12 articles. Be prepared to select nine from those articles for your final portfolio. Use the section in your notebook to keep these materials.
2. Keep a list of the articles you have already gathered. Your teacher will give you a tracking sheet for these materials. Materials may be checked at any time as an assessment of your progress and learning skills.
3. If you do not get a daily newspaper at home, you may have to borrow or buy one. Buy weekend editions as they have more content. Also, you may ask the school librarian for old newspapers.
4. Plan your writing carefully and have someone edit it before the submission date. Your teacher will provide you with a checklist to aid you and your editor.
5. Be sure to ask questions and get extra help if needed.

Three questions I have for my teacher about this assignment are:
1. 
2. 
3. 

Self-Evaluation: Progress Report
In order to organize and complete a successful Civics portfolio, there are things that you need to stop doing, there are things that you need to start doing, and there are things that you must continue to do. Record three things for each category.

Three things I must STOP:
1. 
2. 
3. 

Three things I must START:
1. 
2. 
3. 

Three things I must CONTINUE:
1. 
2. 
3. 

Parent/Guardian: I am aware that my daughter/son has been assigned this culminating activity.
Name: ________________________________ Date: ____________________
Signature: ________________________________________

Home telephone number (s): ________________________________
Work telephone number (s): ________________________________
Additional Questions and Answers

1. What if someone is away for the debate portion of creative controversy?
   If you have attendance concerns, form pairs and only combine for groups of four at the beginning of the debate phase. In these circumstances you can have students responsible for understanding both positions from the outset. Assign teams of four and initial positions for advocacy—pro or con—at the beginning of the debating period. If the preparation and debate steps occur in the same class, attendance should not be an issue.

   If the controversy spans 2 1/2 periods, organize the classes as follows:
   1st class- steps 1-4 above
   2nd class- steps 5-8 above
   3rd class- steps 9-12 above

2. How Do I Prepare Students to Interact in this Way?
   Teachers often mistakenly assume that students know how to work together. But this may not be always so, even in senior classes. Some of the important skills and behaviors students need to participate fully are (from Clarke, Wideman, & Eadie, 1990).

   Task Skills
   • asking questions
   • asking for clarification
   • checking for others' understanding
   • elaborating on others' ideas
   • following directions
   • getting the group back to work
   • keeping track of time
   • listening actively
   • sharing information and ideas
   • staying on task
   • summarizing for understanding
   • paraphrasing

   Working Relationship Skills
   • acknowledging contributions
   • checking for agreement
   • disagreeing in an agreeable way
   • encouraging others
   • expressing support
   • inviting others to talk
   • keeping things calm/reducing tension
   • mediating
   • responding to ideas
   • sharing feelings
   • showing appreciation

   Both kinds of skills are necessary. In order for groups to do the task, they need to attend to those things that will help people get along while working together. Working with others is intense. Teacher impatience with what seems to be off-task behavior can result in premature intervention preventing group members from solving their own problems. You will need to use your judgment on this one.

   Here are some suggestions for preparing students for serious debate and discussion.

   You can use a direct instruction approach in which group norms or behaviors are defined, modeled, and practiced. Some teachers take time at the beginning of the year for teambuilding and classbuilding activities in order to build a climate for learning. Other teachers use an experiential approach stressing student self-reflection. In any case, behaviors should not be taught in isolation, but fitted with the content and tasks required.
in your lessons. After any learning experience, students should have opportunities to reflect on their learning by considering "What went well?" "How can we improve?"

**What are Some Criteria for a Sound Argument?**
Can students, either in a written or oral report:
- Present a final position on the issue?
- Support that position with an argument based on evidence, recognizing that evidence is information which is relevant, accurate, and important?
- Consider ideas from both original positions?
- Offer sound reasons for supporting some arguments and rejecting others?
- Conclude with a restatement of the final position?

**Identifying the Nature of Public Issues**
Although conflict is natural, resolving conflicts is essential. Because contemporary and historical issues seldom have a single correct answer, it is important to have some tools to help you identify sources of disagreement and decide on the best course of action to resolve them.

Some questions are *definitional*—that is, there is disagreement about the meaning of key words and phrases. Examples:
- What is a global issue?
- What is national sovereignty?

Some questions are *factual*—that is, there is disagreement about the facts, descriptions, or explanations of an issue. Examples:
- What is the effect of global warming on the plane?
- What is the United Nation's record on resolving international conflict?

Some questions are *ethical*—that is, they involve making judgments about what is right or wrong. Examples:
- Should countries who violate previously signed international agreements be punished?
- Should countries wage war without United Nations approval?

**Strategies for Maintaining Productive Dialogue**
There are strategies you can use to maintain a productive dialogue about these issues:
- When discussing definitional issues, make stipulations at the outset. Agree to working definitions using authoritative sources to ensure that clear and open discussions ensue.
- When discussing factual issues, appeal to common knowledge or relate to a personal experience.
• When discussing value issues, use analogies to compare conflicting values and discuss how these might be weighed using value-loaded language while avoiding personal attacks. Make predictions about what might happen if a particular action is taken.

**Testing Decision-Making Principles**
Once decisions are made, they need to be tested to see if they represent the best course of action.

**New Cases Test**
• Apply the principles you have accepted to analogous or logically relevant situations. For example, if you disagree with the Kyoto Protocols would you still change your view if
  • A clearer link to climate change were established?
  • The United States signed on?
  • You had better assurances that Canada's economy would not be damaged?
  • We had had another summer of hotter than average temperatures and record levels of air pollution?

**Role Exchange Test**
Put yourself in the place of those people affected by the application of the principle. For example, would the principle of Canada not supporting current U.S. policy on Iraq still apply if
• You had relatives serving in the U.S. or Iraqi military?
• You had lost relatives in the 9/11 attack?
• You were a Kurdish civilian in Bagdad?

**Universal Consequences Test**
Consider the consequences if everyone was affected by the application of the principles. For example, would the principle of Canada supporting current United Nations' policy on Iraq still apply if
• Every other country supported the U.S. action

**Subsumption Test**
Try to show that the principle is consistent with another general value principle. For example, is the principle of Canada not supporting the creation of a World Court consistent with the government’s responsibility to protect Canadian citizens and Canada's national sovereignty?

**References**


For co-operative learning in general, contact the Great Lakes Association For Co-operation In Education. (GLACIE). GLACIE has published newsletters and held conference since 1986:
www. glacie.ca

For an international network which presents an extensive array to resources:
http://www.iasce.net

For Complex Instruction:
http://www.stanford.edu/group/pci/

For Tribes:
http://www.tribes.com/index.html