

Lessons were originally developed by The Keystone Center and Arizona State University for NASA's Mars Exploration Program, and are provided courtesy of NASA/JPL-Caltech. They have been modified for use by Brevard Public Schools.



Opinion Activity

Language Arts



Goal: Provide safe environment for students to share opinions about controversial topics and to understand the opinions of others.

Objectives: Students will...

- Define their own stance on controversial topics
- Actively listen to a variety of perspectives
- Understand different perspectives

Materials (for a class of 30):

- 30 copies of the Opinion Activity-Student Sheet
- 30 copies of Opinion Activity-Dihydrogen Monoxide
- Pencils or pens
- Signs for "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Undecided," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree"
- 5 pieces of string, each approximately 10 feet long

Time Required: 45-60 minute period

National Standards Met: LA3, LA4, LA6, LA7, LA11, LA12

Florida State Standards Met: LA.A.1.3, LA.C.1.3

Procedure:

- Give each student the Opinion Activity-Student Sheet and have him or her circle the option that best represents their opinion. If they ask what 'dihydrogen monoxide' is, do not tell them! (It is water.)
- Do NOT write names on the student sheets.
- Go outside. Use signs to create a lichert scale on the ground, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.
- Choose one statement from the Opinion Activity-Student Sheet and have a student read the statement aloud.
- Students should form a line behind the sign that represents their opinion.
- Ask one student from each line to explain why they are standing in that spot.
- Ask if any students would like to move based on the various rationales given.
- IMPORTANT! This is not a debate. Do not allow students to complete this as a point-counter-point style. Each line gets one opportunity to share their opinion.
- IMPORTANT! Be a neutral facilitator. It is very important that students understand that there is not one right answer. Be very aware of your responses as each student shares their opinion; it is critical to have the same response to each opinion.
- Debrief the opinions shared by repeating what was stated.
- Choose another statement from the student sheet and ask a student to read the statement aloud.
- Have the students switch papers several times.

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- They must now proceed to the sign that represents the opinion reflected on that sheet of paper.
- One student from each sign should explain the rationale for that opinion. Only allow students to share the opinion represented on the sheet of paper they are holding – this is not the time to share their own opinions.
- Have students hold string from front to back and fold over excess.
- Place string on the ground, have students move away from the lines in order to see graph.
- Ask students to raise their hands if they heard opinions based on facts.
- Ask students to raise their hands if they heard opinions based on emotion.
- Ask students to raise their hands if they chose to move after hearing the various opinions.
- Return to classroom and discuss with students how and why people change or do not change their opinions. Ask them if they have ever been swayed to change their opinion on a controversial topic.
- Hand out the Opinion Activity-Dihydrogen Monoxide sheet to students. Review. Students may not realize that dihydrogen monoxide is really just regular water!

Homework:

- Students should write a paragraph explaining when they had their own opinion changed based on the opinion of another.

Assessment:

- Participation in class activity
- Completed student sheet
- Completed homework paragraph

Further Information on the history of Dihydrogen Monoxide may be found at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dihydrogen_monoxide_hoax

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Opinion Activity-Student Sheet

Important! DO NOT write your name on this sheet.

STRONGLY AGREE (SA)	AGREE (A)	UNDECIDED (U)	DISAGREE (D)	STRONGLY DISAGREE (SD)
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1. Toxic wastes should be disposed of in the state where they originated.

SA	A	U	D	SD
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2. Cigarette smokers should not be allowed to smoke in any public place.

SA	A	U	D	SD
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3. Bike riders should be required by law to wear a helmet.

SA	A	U	D	SD
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4. Animals should not be used in medical research.

SA	A	U	D	SD
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5. Nuclear power sources should be used for space exploration.

SA	A	U	D	SD
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6. Solar energy is the best power source for the exploration of Mars.

SA	A	U	D	SD
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7. Uniforms should be mandatory at all public schools.

SA	A	U	D	SD
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8. Mars is the planet most like Earth.

SA	A	U	D	SD
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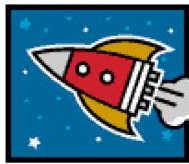
9. Recycling should be mandatory.

SA	A	U	D	SD
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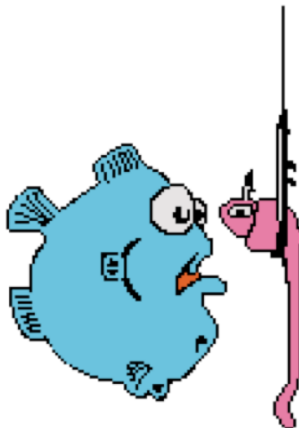
10. Dihydrogen Monoxide should be banned in all public places.

SA	A	U	D	SD
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Opinion Activity-Dihydrogen Monoxide



This page is only for people who wish to ban dihydrogen monoxide because of its toxic properties.

Dihydrogen Monoxide:

- Causes excessive sweating and vomiting
- A major component of acid rain
- Can cause severe burns in the gaseous state
- Accidental inhalation can kill you
- Primary contributor to erosion
- Decreases effectiveness of automobile brakes
- Has been found in tumors of terminal cancer patients
- May dissolve metal ions especially in the presence of road salt

Despite the danger, dihydrogen monoxide is often used:

- as an industrial solvent and coolant.
- in nuclear power plants.
- in the production of Styrofoam.
- as a fire retardant.
- in many forms of cruel animal research.
- in the distribution of pesticides. Even after washing, produce remains contaminated by this chemical.
- as an additive in certain "junk-foods" and other food products.