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# Table of Contents

IntelliMetric® Prompts .............................................................. 3
- Adding A Class to Your School's Curriculum ......................... 3
- Advertising on School Grounds ........................................... 3
- After-School Job ................................................................. 4
- Challenges of Parenthood .................................................... 4
- Choosing a Rewarding Occupation ....................................... 4
- Choosing a School ............................................................. 5
- Competition or Competence ............................................... 5
- Competitive Sport Requirement .......................................... 5
- Consequences of Success ................................................... 5
- Department Store Dilemma .................................................. 6
- Do You Agree With a Curfew? .............................................. 6
- Eliminating Extracurricular Activities ................................... 6
- Emphasis on Sports ............................................................ 6
- Essential Job Skills ............................................................ 6
- Extracurricular Activities Requirement ............................... 8
- Internet Classrooms vs. Traditional Classrooms .................... 8
- It Should Be Law! ............................................................... 8
- Limiting the Amount of Homework ...................................... 8
- Mandatory Recycling ........................................................ 9
- Our Changing Society ........................................................ 9
- Paying Students to Keep Schools Safe ................................. 9
- Recommending Literature .................................................. 10
- Requiring Protective Helmets ............................................. 10
- Requiring School Uniforms ................................................ 10
- Responding to a Quotation About Luck ............................... 10
- Time Capsule ..................................................................... 11
- Tyranny of the Majority ..................................................... 11
- What is Wisdom? ............................................................... 11
- Your Special Skill ............................................................. 12

Pilot Prompts ................................................................. 12
- A Global Language (pilot) .................................................. 12
- Alternate Energy Sources (pilot) ......................................... 12
- A Sense of Wonder (pilot) ................................................... 13
- Cloning (pilot) .................................................................... 13
- Conflict Resolution Programs in Schools (pilot) .................... 13
- Controversy in Science 101 (pilot) ....................................... 14
- Dependence on Calculators (pilot) ..................................... 14
IntelliMetric® Prompts

Adding A Class to Your School's Curriculum

Your principal is currently considering adding a new class to your school's curriculum and is seeking suggestions from students. What new course do you think your school should offer? How would this course benefit students?

Write a letter to your principal recommending a new class and convincing him or her to offer it in your high school.

Advertising on School Grounds
Schools across the nation often have to contend with a lack of adequate funds. As a result, school district administrators have had to find creative ways to obtain additional revenue. Some schools have allowed corporate sponsors to provide money and/or equipment in exchange for advertising on school grounds. Proponents of such plans assert that schools desperately need the funding/equipment and that students benefit from such corporate sponsorships. Opponents argue that these arrangements allow corporations to treat school children as potential consumers, not learners, and that schools should be safe from commercial pressure.

Write a letter to your local school board either supporting or opposing a plan to allow corporate sponsors to provide money and/or equipment in exchange for advertising on school grounds.

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After-School Job

You are trying to decide whether to take an after-school job during the school year. The money would be helpful, but you would have to give up something else to find time to work.

Write a letter to your parent(s) persuading them that you should or should not get a job during high school.

Challenges of Parenthood

Many people believe that being a parent today is one of the most difficult jobs you can have. Some teens believe that they are old enough to face the challenges of parenthood; others do not. State your position on the issue and provide reasons for your decision. Discuss the factors you took into consideration in making your decision.

Choosing a Rewarding Occupation

People choose their occupations for different reasons: to make money, to help others, or to make the world a better place.
What do you think is the most rewarding occupation you could have, excluding illegal activities? Write a newspaper editorial to convince readers which occupation is the most rewarding and why.

Choosing a School

A foreign student is considering several American schools to attend.

Why would your school be the best choice? Write an essay persuading the student that he or she should attend your school.

Competition or Competence

"Trying to be number one and trying to do a task well are two different things."
-- Alfie Kohn

Many apply the law of the jungle (i.e. "the survival of the fittest") to human behavior. Is it more important to be highly competitive or highly competent in order to be successful?

Write a multi-paragraph essay supporting your position on this issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples from your own experiences or readings.

Competitive Sport Requirement

Your school board is considering adopting a new rule that requires every student to play at least one competitive sport in order to graduate from high school.

Do you think this is a good idea? Why or why not? Write a letter to persuade members of the school board that they should or should not adopt this rule.

Consequences of Success

"Each success only buys an admission ticket to a more difficult problem."

While most of us strive for success, we are sometimes surprised to learn that it is not always a good thing. In fact, some people believe it can lead to more difficult problems. Do you agree or disagree?

Write a multi-paragraph essay supporting your position on this issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples from your own experiences or readings.
Department Store Dilemma

A large department store chain wants to open a store just outside your town or city. The new store would attract customers from miles around and would create jobs. It would also drive some local store owners out of business and would cause traffic problems.

Write a letter to the editor of a local newspaper to convince people why they should support the new store or prevent it from being built.

Do You Agree With a Curfew?

The mayor of your town is considering establishing a 10:00 pm curfew for all children under the age of 18. What do you think?

Write a multi-paragraph letter to persuade your mayor that he or she should or should not enact the curfew.

Eliminating Extracurricular Activities

Your school district has recently decided to eliminate your favorite sport or club due to funding problems. Do you think that eliminating sports teams or clubs is a good way for school districts to help reduce spending? Why or why not?

Write an essay either to persuade the district to uphold its decision or to persuade the district to change its decision and reinstate the sport or club.

Emphasis on Sports

Some people believe that sports are an important part of school life. Others think that there is too much emphasis placed on sports. Which position do you take?

Write an essay persuading the reader to accept your position.

Essential Job Skills

Many people have argued that the skills needed to be successful in today's workforce have changed. What skills do you feel an individual needs to be successful in a job today? Why do you feel these skills are most important?
In an essay to be read by a teacher, identify the skills you feel are most needed by an individual to be successful at work and provide reasons to persuade your teacher that these are the most critical skills for success.
Extracurricular Activities Requirement

Your school is considering a proposal that would only allow students who have a "C" average or better to participate in extracurricular activities such as sports, band and clubs. Students who do not have an average grade of "C" or better would not be able to participate in these activities. Do you feel that students should be required to maintain a "C" average or better in order to participate in extracurricular activities?

Write a letter persuading your principal to accept your recommendation on whether or not students should be required to have a "C" average or better to participate in extracurricular activities.

Internet Classrooms vs. Traditional Classrooms

With advancements in technology, some students have chosen to complete their schoolwork through the Internet, rather than in traditional classrooms. Those who support a traditional classroom approach to learning argue that it provides more of an opportunity for students to interact with the teacher and other students. Those who feel that learning over the Internet is better argue that it allows students to learn anytime and anywhere they choose.

Do you feel education is better provided in traditional classrooms or when offered over the Internet? Write an essay to be read by a classroom teacher in which you persuade the reader that either traditional classroom education or Internet-based learning is better.

It Should Be Law!

New laws are continually being put into place in order to provide order, rules, and regulations that guide the actions of the members of the country, state, or local municipality.

Write an essay in which you persuade your local townspeople that a certain new law should be put into place. In your essay, provide an explanation of the law you wish to enact and at least three reasons in support of the need for the law. You may support your reasons with statistics, quotes, or other research you have gathered on the issue.

Limiting the Amount of Homework

Your school is reviewing its homework policy and has asked for your recommendation whether there should be a limit on the amount of homework assigned by teachers. Some students feel that the amount of homework should be limited to allow more time for other
extracurricular activities. Some teachers, however, are opposed to limits on the amount of homework they can assign and believe that they are in the best position to decide how much homework is required for learning.

Do you feel that the amount of homework assigned by teachers should be limited? Write an essay to be read by a classroom teacher supporting or opposing a policy to limit the amount of homework assigned to students.

**Mandatory Recycling**

Your class is studying recycling. On the one hand recycling can help protect the environment. On the other hand recycling is inconvenient and places an added burden on citizens. Do you feel that recycling should be required of all citizens? Why?

Write an essay persuading your legislator to accept your recommendation on whether or not recycling should be mandatory.

**Our Changing Society**

"How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single minute before starting to improve the world."

--Anne Frank

While society is currently undergoing many rapid changes, people disagree about their direction. Has the world, in fact, changed for the better or worse?

Write a multi-paragraph essay supporting your position on this issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples from your own experiences or readings.

**Paying Students to Keep Schools Safe**

There are schools that offer a cash reward to individuals who provide information about students carrying weapons to school. Rewards are also given for tips about drug use and vandalism.

Imagine that your school is considering a similar policy. Do you think students should be paid to tell on each other? Write a persuasive letter to your principal convincing him or her to agree with you. Make sure to include specific details and examples to support your arguments.
Recommending Literature

Your school is reviewing the literature to be included in high school English courses. You have been asked to recommend a book, story or other piece of literature to be included in the list of books to be read by high school students. Which piece of literature would you include in a high school English course? Why would you choose it?

Write an essay to be read by a teacher persuading your school to include the piece of literature you recommend in the new reading list.

Requiring Protective Helmets

Do you think that people under the age of 18 should be required to wear protective helmets when skateboarding, in-line skating, bicycling, snowboarding, or skiing? Why or why not?

Write a persuasive essay for or against the idea that young people should be required to wear helmets when taking part in these activities.

Requiring School Uniforms

Your school is considering requiring all students to wear uniforms during school. Do you feel it is a good idea or a bad idea to require students to wear uniforms? Why?

Write an essay persuading your principal to accept your recommendation on whether or not your school should require students to wear uniforms.

Responding to a Quotation About Luck

Carefully read the following quote from Oprah Winfrey:

"Luck is a matter of preparation meeting opportunity."

What do you think the speaker was trying to say about the notions of luck and opportunity? Do you agree or disagree with the speaker?

In a well-developed essay, discuss what you think this quote means and whether you agree with it or not. Use specific examples from your studies, personal experience, and/or observations to support your interpretation.
Time Capsule

Your school is preparing a time capsule with items that effectively represent the times in which we live. You have been asked to recommend one item to include in the time capsule. What item would you recommend? Why?

Write an essay persuading the time capsule selection committee to include the item you recommend.

Tyranny of the Majority

... Protection, therefore, against the tyranny of the magistrate is not enough; there needs to be protection also against the tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling, against the tendency of society to impose, by other means than civil penalties, its own ideas and practices as rules of conduct on those who dissent from them; to fetter the development and, if possible, prevent the formation of any individuality not in harmony with its ways, and compel all characters to fashion themselves upon the model of its own. There is a limit to the legitimate interference of collective opinion with individual independence; and to find that limit, and maintain it against encroachment, is as indispensable to a good condition of human affairs as protection against political despotism...

On Liberty
John Stuart Mill

Read the excerpt from John Stuart Mill warning of the tyranny of the majority -- the ability of the majority of the people to control all individuals in a representative democracy. Is majority rule an effective method of government? Should the majority of the people be able to impose their views on all the citizens?

In a persuasive essay, take a position on this issue and defend your position using examples based on your experience and reading.

What is Wisdom?

"It is no longer enough to be smart -- all the technological tools in the world add meaning and value only if they enhance our core values, the deepest part of our heart. Acquiring knowledge is no guarantee of practical, useful application. Wisdom implies a mature integration of appropriate knowledge, a seasoned ability to filter the inessential from the essential."
--Doc Childre and Deborah Rozman

People define wisdom in a variety of ways. How would you define it?
Write a multi-paragraph essay exploring your own conception of what it is that makes a person wise. Be sure to support your interpretation with specific details and examples from your own experiences or readings.

Your Special Skill

Imagine that you have decided to apply for a job. As part of the job application, you have been asked to identify one thing that you do particularly well and to write an essay convincing the employer to hire you based on this special talent.

Write an essay identifying your special skill and convincing the employer to hire you based on your special skill.

Pilot Prompts

A Global Language (pilot)

Currently there are hundreds of languages spoken in countries all over the world. Yet, due to increases in global business and communications, it is becoming more essential for citizens of the world to be able to communicate with one another effectively. So, do you think the world should adopt one global language? If so, what language should be used?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you defend your position. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Alternate Energy Sources (pilot)

Electricity is necessary for the operation of everyday electronic devices such as televisions, computers, microwaves and refrigerators. Suppose there were a global force that stopped the flow of electrons. Convince the public what energy sources you would set up and use in your home to help you survive and why. Include your own ideas, insights, and understanding of the problem.
A Sense of Wonder (pilot)

"Wonder is a pause of reason, a sudden cessation of the mental progress, which lasts only while the understanding is fixed upon some single idea...It may be remarked with equal truth that ignorance is often the effect of wonder." -The Rambler, No 137, by Samuel Johnson

"The most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and all science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead: his eyes are closed." -Albert Einstein

Samuel Johnson and Albert Einstein share different opinions regarding our sense of wonder and its overall usefulness. Do you agree with Einstein or Johnson's view of wonder?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you persuade your teacher to agree with your definition of wonder. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Cloning (pilot)

Scientists have successfully cloned animals like Dolly the sheep. Some people hope that cloning techniques will be used to clone humans someday, while others strongly oppose this use of technology. What is your position on cloning humans?

Write a persuasive essay articulating your position on the cloning of humans. Use specific examples and details to support your views.

Conflict Resolution Programs in Schools (pilot)

School violence has become one of the main concerns for parents and administrators throughout America. In order to curb parental fears and concerns, Conflict Resolution programs have been introduced into many school districts. Conflict Resolution programs mainly start at the beginning of the school year, and consist of simulated situations and discussions that best aid students in how best to handle their anger and many difficult situations they face at school. Peer interaction, problem solving skills and strategies and role playing are other key factors that are stressed within these classes.

Some believe that schools should use their money to make these programs consistent throughout the year in order to better aid students, while critics of Conflict Resolution programs view them as a waste of precious funds and classroom time. They believe that most schools already have counselors and established programs to aid students in dealing with difficult encounters. They also argue that in reality, school violence is a larger societal problem of violence and that simply putting money into several school programs...
will do little to defeat a larger social issue.

Do you believe that Conflict Resolution programs are a feasible means to help prevent school violence or do you agree with the program's critics and see it as a waste of important school dollars? In a detailed essay, articulate your position on this issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Controversy in Science 101 (pilot)

Many people think of science education as a straightforward, "just the facts" kind of academic endeavor. Yet, there are many controversial topics that are taught in the nation's science classrooms, with the issues of Intelligent Design and Global Warming only two of the most recent examples.

Discuss a current science topic that you believe is controversial. How do you think this subject ought to be taught in a high school science classroom? Be sure to support your response position with specific examples from your studies, personal experience, and/or observations.

Dependence on Calculators (pilot)

The first mechanical calculator was invented in 1642, but it wasn’t until modern times that the average person relied heavily on a machine to complete mathematical calculations. Today, there are calculators with specific applications, including one which will convert measurements for recipes. Have we become too dependent on calculators? What might be the long-term consequences of this dependence?

In a well-developed essay, articulate your position on the level of our dependence on calculators. Include examples and reasons for your position.

Driver’s Ed or Personal Finance? (pilot)

Young people need many skills to be successful adults after high school: They should learn how to properly save and spend money in order to manage their finances, but they also require driving skills in order to be safe on the road.

Imagine that your school has announced that it will sponsor either a Driver's Education or Personal Finance class for all seniors in your school. Which class do you think is more important for students at your school? Write an essay to your principal in which you support the choice of one class or the other. Be sure to support your choice with relevant details and arguments.
Eliminating the Penny (pilot)

For many years, there has been a growing debate over whether or not the penny should be eliminated from all cash transactions. There are vastly differing opinions on the effect the elimination of the penny would have on the government, businesses, and individuals. What is your opinion on this issue? Should the penny be eliminated?

Write a persuasive letter to your Congressman or Congresswoman arguing for or against the elimination of the penny. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Enough is Enough! Or is it? (pilot)

"The ideals which have lighted my way, and time after time have given me new courage to face life cheerfully, have been Kindness, Beauty, and Truth. The trite subjects of human efforts, possessions, outward success, luxury have always seemed to me contemptible." -- Albert Einstein

Many "wise" people routinely complain that Americans have become too concerned with material possessions. Einstein's quote demonstrates just this sentiment. Yet we cannot escape the fact that the American consumer is responsible for nearly two-thirds of all economic activity in the United States. So surely, many people must enjoy and find comfort in buying, selling, and trading material possessions. Do you?

Write a persuasive essay in which you articulate your position on this issue. What "rule" would you offer to a friend to guide him or her in leading the right kind of life with respect to material possessions? Be sure to support your stance with examples and reasons drawn from your studies, personal experience, and/or observations.

Genetically Modified Foods (pilot)

Read the passage about genetically modified foods. Considering the risks and benefits of this new technology, what do you think about the use of such foods? Write a well-developed essay in which you articulate a position on the use of genetically modified foods. Support your position with information from the passage or other research you have conducted.

What are Genetically Modified Foods?

The safety and availability of food continues to be one of the most pressing issues on the global agenda. In many countries, poor families struggle to find enough food to
maintain their health and vitality; young people in these areas often do not receive the proper nutrition and vitamins from the foods they eat. In the United States, on the other hand, while food is abundant, many people are concerned by the pesticides that contaminate the food and the bacteria that foul meats on their way to our dinner tables. Some scientists and industry experts believe that genetically engineered foods could provide a much sought after solution to all of these problems. Often referred to as "bio-engineering" or "genetic modification," the act of genetically engineering foods has itself become a very controversial issue debated in parliaments, grocery stores, and kitchens around the world.

Genetic modification is the act of combining various genes from different organisms, so-called recombinant DNA technology, resulting in a brand new, modified organism. Scientists claim that these new organisms possess extremely beneficial traits which will ultimately benefit humanity. As this technology is perfected, genetically modified organisms are becoming more and more common, showing up in such products as medicines, vaccines, foods, and industrial materials. Still, genetic modification is particularly important to food manufacturers. Foods can now be created that are resistant to pests and viruses, or which contain higher amounts of important vitamins and minerals. The larger, more nutritious, and longer-lasting foods that are being engineered in laboratories will ultimately feed more people while having an extended shelf-life in markets across the world. Advocates of genetic modification also believe that plants and animals that have been genetically engineered will soon provide enhanced taste, leaner meats, and healthier eggs and milk.

Though many scientists trumpet the benefits of genetic modification, there is a rising tide of critics who have serious concerns about its effectiveness and safety. Many farmers, citizens, and scientists believe that the companies researching genetic engineering have rushed to distribute various products with little concern for their possible long-term effects on humans. One of the major uncertainties is that the new genes or proteins introduced into the food supply might produce unforeseen toxins in animals, fruits and vegetables, and the environment. These new toxins could cause harm in the short or long term by producing diseases or mutations of which scientists have little knowledge. Food allergies related to the modified foods could even prove fatal to unsuspecting consumers. Other concerns include whether corporations and wealthier nations of the world will unfairly benefit from genetic engineering by making smaller, poorer countries dependent on these foods and technologies. Some countries have even gone so far as to outlaw the sale of genetically modified foods until they are better understood.
Gun Control and Violence (pilot)

"Guns don't kill people, people kill people," is an expression often quoted by those who support the right to freely carry firearms. For many years, organizations such as the National Rifle Association (NRA) have pointed to the high rate of gun violence in the United States and compared it with the low rates in Europe; this comparison was done in order to stress their point that gun violence is a cultural/societal problem that should not impede anyone's right to own firearms. Those who advocate gun control, and oppose the NRA, point to the United States' high level of gun ownership (as compared to other countries) as one of the leading reasons for the increase in the amounts of murders and violence associated with guns. They also point to the easy accessibility of guns in America as one of the major causes of the high level of gun violence.

In a well-developed essay, articulate whether you believe that gun violence is a societal/cultural problem or an issue of gun control that can be legislated. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Invasion of Privacy (pilot)

Notices from credit card companies, ads on television, warnings on the evening news, release forms at the doctor’s office, and locker searches at school all address the issue of invasion of privacy. Some are opposed to what they believe is an increased invasion of privacy for individuals. Others believe that national and individual safety and security necessitate some invasion of privacy for individuals.

In a well-developed essay, articulate your position on your right to privacy. Include facts and examples to support your position.

Later School Opening (pilot)

Current research suggests that because teenagers have different sleep patterns, they would benefit from beginning the school day at a later time. Some schools are considering holding the school day from 9am-4pm. Is this new time schedule more beneficial or detrimental to the well-being of the students?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you persuade the Board of Education to agree with your position on this issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Limitations of Machines (pilot)

“You insist that there is something a machine cannot do. If you tell me precisely what it
is a machine cannot do, then I can always make a machine which will do just that.” –John von Neumann

“One machine can do the work of fifty men. No machine can do the work of one extraordinary man.” –Elbert Hubbard, philosopher, writer (1856-1915)

John von Neumann and Elbert Hubbard present two different notions regarding man and machine. Do you think that machines can be designed to do anything, or are there some things that a machine cannot do?

In a well-developed essay, articulate your position on this issue. Be sure to include details and examples that support your argument.

Nature vs. Nurture (pilot)

Psychologists have argued for centuries regarding the influences of nature (genetic influences) and nurture (environmental influences) on the human personality. There is evidence to support both views, but the question is ultimately, which of the two, nature or nurture, plays the greatest role in shaping our personality.

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you state and defend your position. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

No Presidential Reelection (pilot)

Recently, some observers have speculated as to whether or not one man or woman is both mentally and physically able to run the country for eight straight years. It has been proposed that a twenty-second amendment to the U.S. Constitution be ratified to extend the term of the President from four years to six years and to remove the opportunity for reelection.

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you persuade your readers to agree with your opinion on this controversial issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.
Politicians' Religious Beliefs (pilot)

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." -The First Constitutional Amendment of the United States

The First Amendment of the United States ensures that no law or governmental policy will be created that favors any particular group or system of beliefs, while also securing that no group will be treated unequally due to theirs. In America, a growing number of politicians and lawmakers have begun to openly express their ideology of religious beliefs; some even stating that they use these beliefs to influence legislation that passes their way. While many Americans feel comfortable with these leaders, some have become outraged by these statements, believing it is a direct violation of The First Amendment. They also fear that if this behavior continues, soon, a time will come when all Americans must conform to the principles of one system of beliefs and choice of lifestyle.

Do you agree with the politicians that cite their faith as a better means to legislate or their critics who view this trend in politics as a serious danger to America's system of equality? In a detailed essay, articulate you position on this issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

Proposition 187 (pilot)

Illegal immigration has been one of the more hotly debated issues in American politics. In 1994, California voters passed Proposition 187, eliminating free public education and other public benefits to illegal immigrants.

Though Proposition 187 was eventually defeated due to its unconstitutionality, today, many continue to argue in favor of the basic theme of this proposition. They believe that illegal immigrants and their children deplete the financial and social resources available to Americans, and in turn, damage the overall economy by adding a heavier fiscal burden. Those who support immigrant rights point to the constitution and the overall belief that no individual in need should be turned away.

In a detailed essay, describe whether you agree or disagree with the idea of Proposition 187. Should illegal immigrants be given the same medical and social benefits as American citizens, or should they be forced to find other means to provide for their families? Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.
Rating Movies, Music, and Video Games (pilot)

The amount and intensity of violence, profanity, and other mature content that has been showing up in children's movies, video games, and music lately has stirred quite a public debate about the use of "ratings," such as "MA," to indicate "Mature Content." Some authorities believe ratings should be provided to help parents control what their children can access. Critics, on the other hand, believe such ratings are a waste of time. What do you think?

Write an editorial for your school newspaper in which you argue whether or not you think ratings are an effective way to control children’s access to movies, music, and video games with mature content. Be sure to include specific examples to support your argument.
Reinstating the Draft (pilot)

"Every citizen should be a soldier. This was the case with the Greeks and Romans, and must be that of every free state." -- Thomas Jefferson

With American forces attending to crises across the globe, some experts believe the United States should increase the size of its military by reinstating a mandatory draft. Thomas Jefferson believed that every person has a duty to fight in America's wars. Do you?

In a well-organized essay, discuss whether or not you think the United States should reinstate the draft. Be sure to support your position with significant details from your readings or personal experience.

Reputation or Success? (pilot)

"Regard your good name as the richest jewel you can possibly be possessed of -- for credit is like fire; when once you have kindled it you may easily preserve it, but if you once extinguish it, you will find it an arduous task to rekindle it again. The way to gain a good reputation is to endeavor to be what you desire to appear." -- Socrates

In today's society many people forgo their "good name" as they strive to get to the top: business leaders break ethical rules to earn a profit; sports stars use drugs to enhance their performance; political leaders accept bribes to please their constituents. Do you think success, wealth, and power have become so important in today's society that they have overtaken the need for a "good name" and reputation?

Responding to a Quote by Colin Wilson (pilot)

"The average man is a conformist, accepting miseries and disasters with the stoicism of a cow standing in the rain." -Colin Wilson

What do you think Colin Wilson was trying to say about the average man (or woman)? Do you agree or disagree?

Write a multi-paragraph essay supporting your position on this issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples from your own experiences or readings.

Responding to a Quote by Emerson (pilot)

Carefully read the following quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson's speech, "The American
"But genius looks forward: the eyes of man are set in his forehead, not in his hindhead: man hopes: genius creates."

What do you think the speaker was trying to say about the human mind? How does this quote apply to you?

In a well-developed essay, explain what Emerson's statement means to you. Use specific examples from your studies, personal experience, and/or observations to support your interpretation.

**Responding to a Quote by George Bernard Shaw (pilot)**

Carefully read the following quote by George Bernard Shaw:

"There are two tragedies in life. One is not to get your heart's desire. The other is to get it."

In this quote, what do you think this speaker was trying to say about your dreams versus reality? Do you agree or disagree with the speaker?

In a well-developed essay, discuss what you think this quote means and whether you agree with it or not. Use specific examples from your studies, personal experience, and/or observations to support your interpretation.
Steroids in Sports (pilot)

The entire sports world is under fire over the use and abuse of anabolic steroids and human growth hormones. Amateur and professional sports have become a billion dollar worldwide industry, and for the athletes, the pressure to compete with their peers is enormous. Many popular sports such as baseball, football, tennis, and cycling have been plagued by innuendos of steroid abuse, leaving many of these sports in a state of suspicion and turmoil. This is also the case for many popular Olympic athletes, who have either been caught or suspected of abusing performance-enhancing substances. Over the last two decades, many popular athletes from various sports have either had their records wiped away, or have been suspended after testing positive for illegal performance drugs and hormones. This debate has grown from discussions of who has been taking illegal performance-enhancing substances to whether those who are caught should lose all of their credibility and have a special kind of mark placed on their records.

Do you believe that athletes who have been discovered using illegal steroids or growth hormones should have all of their awards and records taken away, or should they be allowed to keep their records and prove themselves without these performance-enhancing drugs?

In a well-organized essay, articulate your position on this issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

The Declining Interest in Science Education (pilot)

"Science is an integral part of culture. It's not this foreign thing, done by an arcane priesthood. It's one of the glories of the human intellectual tradition." -- Stephen Jay Gould

We live in an age where scientific advances -- in computers, biotechnology, and nanotechnology to name just a few -- come and go with increasing speed. Yet, some observers maintain that young Americans have lost interest in the study of basic science. Why do you think this is the case?

Write an essay in which you discuss your opinion as to why many students have lost interest in studying science. Be sure to support your position with arguments and reasons drawn from your studies or personal observations.

The Importance of Reading (pilot)

All of us have heard time and time again from parents and from teachers that reading is
important. Why do you think reading is so essential?

Write a multi-paragraph essay explaining why reading books, magazines, newspapers, and other forms of writing is so important. Make sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

**The Right to Search (pilot)**

Due to recent acts of violence, schools are considering enforcing a random locker and book bag search to ensure students are not bringing in any illegal drugs or weapons. These random searches are intended to make students feel safer, allowing students to focus more on their education than their own well-being.

Write a letter to your principal convincing him or her to agree with your position on this issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

**The Source of Our Talent (pilot)**

"Beyond talent lie all the usual words: discipline, love, luck -- but, most of all, endurance." -- James A. Baldwin

We have all come across very talented people at some point in our lives; these individuals may play sports with great skill, be gifted artists, or possess some other talent that they seem to use with great ease. Do you think that people are born with talent, or do you agree with Baldwin's statement which suggests that talent is actually the result of commitment and hard work?

In a well-organized essay, articulate your position on this issue. Be sure to support your position with arguments and reasons drawn from your readings or personal observations.

**Tiger Farming: Pro or Con? (pilot)**

After reading the article about tiger farming, consider the plight of the Southern Chinese tiger.

Write a detailed essay in which you take a position on the issue of tiger farming. Is it a viable solution to the problems that face the tiger? Why or why not? Be sure to support your position with specific examples and arguments from the article, or your studies and research.
Title IX and Sports Equality (pilot)

Title IX is part of the landmark legislation that banned gender discrimination from schools; it states:

*No person in the U.S. shall, on the basis of sex be excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal aid.*

This law has had a tremendous impact on the world of high school and college athletics. In the past, schools focused most of their funding and attention on men’s athletics, but Title IX demands that schools fund women’s programs equally. This has increased the competition for limited school resources and led to some men’s sports being abolished. What do you think of this issue?

Write a persuasive essay in which you articulate your position on this law. What do you think is the best way to create an equal playing field for both men and women’s sports? Be sure to include specific details to support your argument.

Truth and Lies (pilot)

"Truly, to tell lies is not honorable; but when the truth entails tremendous ruin, to speak dishonorably is pardonable." -- Sophocles

Is it always necessary to tell the truth, regardless of the consequences, or are there times when it is permissible to tell a lie? What "rule" should guide a person in determining when to tell the truth or to tell a lie?

Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you articulate your position on this issue. Be sure to support your position with relevant examples and arguments from your readings or personal experience.

Use of Rote Memorization in Mathematics Instruction (pilot)

Many experts have argued for the elimination of rote memorization as a method for learning mathematical facts such as basic operations and properties. They believe that other instructional practices are more effective. What do you think?

In a well-developed essay, articulate your position on the value of rote memorization of mathematical facts. Be sure to include specific reasons and examples to support your argument.
**What Makes a Good Coach? (pilot)**

Coaches play an important role in our lives, guiding us as we develop our athletic skills and abilities. Experience tells us that different coaches will have different styles, strengths, and weaknesses. What qualities do you think a good coach should possess?

In a well-developed essay, discuss the qualities that you feel define a good coach. Support your position with well-reasoned arguments or examples from your own experience or reading.

**Women in Combat Roles (pilot)**

In the last several decades, women have signed up for military service in increasing numbers, and consequently, their service has occasionally brought them into combat situations. Americans disagree on whether they think women should be permitted to serve in military roles that will bring them into dangerous combat situations. What do you think?

In a well-developed essay, defend your position on whether or not you think women should be prevented from serving in combat roles in the US military. Be sure to provide reasons and examples to support your argument.

**Xenotransplantation: Promise or Problem? (pilot)**

Due to a worldwide shortage of organs for clinical transplantation, scientists have come to a point where it is reasonable to consider that organs from other species, mostly pigs, could be used as an alternative to human tissues. But great scientific advances always come with a risk; the transplanted tissue may carry unknown latent infections that, once introduced into the recipient, could be activated and give rise to infection. These infectious diseases could be the beginning of a life-threatening pandemic.

Should animal organs be used to replenish this shortage or are the risks to the larger population too great? Write a multi-paragraph essay in which you discuss your position on this controversial issue. Be sure to include specific details and examples to support your argument.

**Xenotransplantation**

There is currently a severe shortage of organs to be transplanted into humans. Xenotransplantation, the process of replacing human tissue with that of other species, could be the answer that many scientists have been looking for to alleviate this shortage. In 2005, an average of fifty-four people died per day waiting for an organ.
transplant. Xenotransplantation has been tested and the evidence suggests that pig organs will be able to replace diseased human tissue in those who need organ transplants as well as in those who have life-threatening illnesses which attack the human tissue system, such as AIDS, diabetes, Parkinson's disease and cancer. This would cause the list of those who are currently waiting for organs, over 70,000 people, to decrease quickly and efficiently and allow those people to enjoy life once again. Xenotransplantation also costs much less than transplanting human organs since pig organs would readily be available. Recent human trials have shown promise in using pig cells for stroke victims and in those suffering from Parkinson's disease.

Unfortunately, there are also dangerous risks involved with animal to human transplantation. The biggest roadblock on the path of Xenotransplantation is the fear that transplanting animal organs into humans could expose them to animal viruses that could not only affect the recipient but could be passed to the general population. These types of viruses are not only those found in the genetic make-up of animals, but rather those that are blood-borne and could easily mutate, causing similar alarm and devastation to humans as with the bird flu.

Another issue raised with Xenotransplantation is whether or not it is ethically or morally right to harvest and kill genetically engineered animals, mostly pigs, and use them for their organs. Before any pig to human transplants can take place, experiments of pig organs to non-human primates must transpire and prove the capability of a three to six month survival rate. Thousands of monkeys, baboons and chimpanzees have been used in tests and killed trying to prove the worthiness of this type of organ transplantation.