

# DEBATES: GETTING STARTED

## BACKGROUND and BENEFITS TO STUDENTS:

Debating is a great way to teach students about many topics related to the standards/ curriculum. In the classroom, debating can be as formal or informal as you wish. Debate skills enhance children's problem solving skills, communication skills, defending skills and better topic knowledge. It also supports great listening skills. Students learn to think critically, use persuasive skills, they learn to listen to defend, understand and to analyze information. You can have debates with the whole class or as group work.

## GETTING STARTED:

1. Brainstorm what **debate** is. *(Answers will vary—An organized or formal argument focused on an issue with two sides (teams), one for and one against.)*
2. Brainstorm how debates can be useful. *(Making decisions, learning about a topic, point of view).*
3. Brainstorm a variety of topics that debates may be suited to.  
*(Homework should be 30 mins every night, school day should be half days, pets should be allowed at school, zoos should be banned or debate a location for an upcoming field trip.)*

Select a specific issue/concern or one of the brainstormed debate topics from number 3 above and ask the students where they stand on the issue.

### **Strongly Agree / Agree / Disagree**

Make a T-Chart on the board with a + and a - sign to record the reasons for each side.

Ask students to give their reasons for their responses. *(Discuss opinions and facts for the basis of their responses.)*

As the T-Chart fills up with student generated reasons for and against, ask the students if they've maybe changed their mind after listening to the responses of others.