

7 Billion - Where do you Stand?



Introduction:

Sometimes it is easier to think through an issue if you are asked to “take a stand” on it. For this activity, students are asked to take a position and articulate their views on several contemporary issues that are related to a population of seven billion and their resource consumption trends.

Materials:

5 signs reading “Strongly Agree,” “Agree,” “?”, “Disagree,” and “Strongly Disagree”
Masking tape

Procedure:

1. Tape the signs on the wall around the classroom.
2. Explain to the students that you will be reading several statements to them, and that they should stand in front of the sign that most closely represents their reaction to the statement you’ve read. They will then be asked to explain their particular stand on each issue. They are free to move to a different sign if/when their opinions change after hearing their classmates’ views.
3. When facilitating the activity, try to give equal time to representatives of different sides of the issue and solicit remarks from as many students as possible. Do not let your own opinions show, but you may pose questions to help students articulate their thoughts.
4. You may want to use some of the following techniques to keep the debate on track. To show respect for viewpoints different than their own, have students paraphrase the opinions offered by others before they speak. To stay focused on content, not personalities, assign students to a position that they must defend, even if it does not mesh with their personal values.

Note: Use your discretion in choosing statements on which students have enough information to form an opinion.

If you’d like to ensure that your students are able to make educated opinions, provide them with the statement(s) you’ll be discussing a day or two ahead of the activity in class. Let them use this time to look into the issue at hand so they can make an informed choice and gather useful knowledge to support their opinions.

Concept:

Dialogue and debate on ethical issues related to population and the environment are helpful in clarifying personal opinions.

Objectives:

Students will be able to:
- Articulate their thoughts on statements that deal with ethical issues about population and the environment.

Subjects:

Family and Consumer Sciences, Geography, History, Language Arts, Science, Social Studies

Skills:

Values clarification, communication, discussion

Method:

Students articulate their thoughts about ethical issues related to population surpassing seven billion and consider the opinions of their classmates.



Statements:

1. Because our population has reached seven billion people and continues to grow, we need to expand land area available for living and growing food by cutting down the rain forest.
2. Without reducing rapid population growth, it will be impossible to solve the world's global challenges.
3. With seven billion people commuting from one place to another, drilling for more oil is necessary to fuel more cars.
4. In order to feed our population, we must use pesticides, chemical fertilizers, and genetically modified crops to increase farm yields.
5. With new technologies used to gather fish, we must have international laws to ensure seafood is harvested sustainably.
6. The Earth can support seven billion people now and will be able to support any number of human in the future.
7. In an effort to feed a population of seven billion, people in developed countries should reduce the amount of meat they consume.
8. Science and technology will ensure that food production and energy supplies keep up with the demands of a growing population.
9. With human population at seven billion, we must protect endangered species habitats by not developing on them for any reason.
10. There is nothing I can do to help alleviate population pressures.
11. Governments in countries with fast-growing populations should make laws to limit the number of children that couples can have.
12. In a real crunch, jobs are more important than environmental quality.
13. With seven billion people on the planet, water pollution is inevitable and we should not waste money trying to prevent it.
14. Even though I am only one person in seven billion, I still have a responsibility to keep the Earth healthy; what I do makes a difference.
15. Automobile makers in this country should be required by law to make all their vehicles fuel-efficient, even though the vehicles may become more expensive.
16. If China and India can each take care of over a billion people on relatively the same size land as the U.S., then the U.S. should accept immigrants until it reaches a billion people as well.
17. All high schools should be prohibited from distributing contraceptives to students under the age of 18.
18. Arable land should never be used for housing, businesses, or other non-agricultural uses because we need all available farmable land to produce food.



Modification:

Instead of having students move around the room and discuss their thoughts on the issues, you can use this activity as a lesson in persuasive writing. Choose one of the statements and ask the students to write a short (3-5 paragraph) essay on their stance. They should choose an audience and try to persuade that audience to believe as they do about the issue.

Follow-up Activities:

1. Students can record their stances for the statement and then research the arguments on both sides to decide if they would like to change their stand. Alternatively, the statement can be used as pre- and post-evaluation to gauge how students' content knowledge has grown as a result of a deeper understanding of the issue.
2. Students can write their own statements that relate to their school, community, or state. Encourage them to create statements that have different viewpoints and are debatable. Use several of these statements for the in-class activity.

Strongly Agree

Agree

???

Disagree

**Strongly
Disagree**