

ENGAGEMENT

# Using Friendly Controversy

THE **MARZANO COMPENDIUM** OF  
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES



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# INTRODUCTION

In 2007, Dr. Robert J. Marzano published *The Art and Science of Teaching: A Comprehensive Framework for Effective Instruction*. The framework, composed of three lesson segments, ten design questions, and forty-one elements, was based on research showing that teacher quality is one of the strongest influences on student achievement—that is, an effective teacher can positively and significantly impact student learning. As such, *The Art and Science of Teaching* sought to identify specific action steps teachers could take to improve their effectiveness.

In 2015, Dr. Marzano updated *The Art and Science of Teaching* framework to reflect new insights and feedback. The Marzano Compendium of Instructional Strategies is based on this updated model, presenting forty-three elements of effective teaching in ten categories. Each folio in the series addresses one element and includes strategies, examples, and reproducible resources. The Compendium and its folios are designed to help teachers increase their effectiveness by focusing on professional growth. To that end, each folio includes a scoring scale teachers can use to determine their proficiency with the element, as well as numerous strategies that teachers can use to enact the element in their classrooms. Indeed, the bulk of each folio consists of these strategies and reproducibles for implementing and monitoring them, making the Compendium a practical, actionable resource for teachers, instructional coaches, teacher mentors, and administrators.

## USING FRIENDLY CONTROVERSY

The teacher uses friendly controversy techniques to maintain student engagement. Research has shown that mild controversy and mild competition have a positive influence on students' learning. Mild controversy involves asking students to express their opinions on an issue and then resolve discrepancies between individuals' perspectives. Mild competition involves competing in the spirit of fun, without embarrassment or consequences for losing.

### Monitoring This Element

There are specific student responses that indicate this element is being effectively implemented. Before trying strategies for the element in the classroom, it is important that the teacher knows how to identify the types of student behaviors that indicate the strategy is producing the desired effects. General behaviors a teacher might look for include the following.

- Students engage in friendly controversy activities with enhanced engagement.
- When asked, students describe friendly controversy activities as “stimulating,” “fun,” and so on.
- When asked, students explain how a friendly controversy activity helped them better understand the content.

Desired behaviors such as these are listed for each strategy in this element.

Teachers often wonder how their mastery of specific strategies relates to their mastery of the element as a whole. Successful execution of an element does not depend on the use of every strategy within that element. Rather, multiple strategies are presented within each element to provide teachers with diverse options. Each strategy can be an effective means of implementing the goals of the element. If teachers attain success using a particular strategy, it is not always necessary to master the rest of the strategies within the same element. If a particular strategy proves difficult or ineffective, however, teachers are encouraged to experiment with various strategies to find the method that works best for them.

## Scoring Scale

The following scoring scale can help teachers assess and monitor their progress with this element. The scale has five levels, from Not Using (0) to Innovating (4). A teacher at the Not Using (0) level is unaware of the strategies and behaviors associated with the element or is simply not using any of the strategies. At the Beginning (1) level, a teacher attempts to address the element by trying specific strategies, but does so in an incomplete or incorrect way. When a teacher reaches the Developing (2) level, he or she implements strategies for the element correctly and completely, but does not monitor their effects. At the Applying (3) level, a teacher implements strategies for the element and monitors their effectiveness with his or her students. Finally, a teacher at the Innovating (4) level is fluent with strategies for the element and can adapt them to unique student needs and situations, creating new strategies for the element as necessary.

### Scale for Using Friendly Controversy

4	3	2	1	0
Innovating	Applying	Developing	Beginning	Not Using
I adapt behaviors and create new strategies for unique student needs and situations.	I use friendly controversy techniques to maintain student engagement, and I monitor the effect on students' engagement.	I use friendly controversy techniques to maintain student engagement, but I do not monitor the effect on students.	I use the strategies and behaviors associated with this element incorrectly or with parts missing.	I am unaware of strategies and behaviors associated with this element.

The following examples describe what each level of the scale might look like in the classroom.

**Not Using (0):** A teacher avoids controversy in her classroom because she is afraid it will lead to conflict.

**Beginning (1):** A teacher allows students to express their differing opinions on various topics, but he does not provide any structured activities to encourage deeper interactions.

**Developing (2):** A teacher frequently has her students engage in structured debates and other perspective-taking activities, but she does not specifically do anything to track whether or not these activities are having their intended effect.

**Applying (3):** A teacher uses friendly controversy in his classroom and monitors signs of student engagement to make sure the strategies are having the desired effect.

**Innovating (4):** A teacher uses structured controversy activities and encourages informal debates during class discussions. It becomes clear, however, that some students disengage during informal debates because they do not feel comfortable participating in these less structured interactions. In order to engage all students, the teacher provides added structure for these students by calling on them specifically to give them a chance to speak and by displaying useful sentence stems on the board to help them phrase their points.

## STRATEGIES

Each of the following strategies describes specific actions that teachers can take to enact this element in their classrooms. Strategies can be used individually or in combination with each other. Each strategy includes a description, a list of teacher actions, a list of desired student responses, and suggestions for adapting the strategy to provide extra support or extensions. Extra support and extensions relate directly to the Innovating (4) level of the scale. Extra support involves steps teachers can take to ensure they are implementing the strategy effectively for all students, including English learners, special education students, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and reluctant learners. Extensions are ways that teachers can adapt the strategy for advanced students. In addition, some strategies include technology tips that detail ways teachers can use classroom technology to implement or enhance the strategy. Finally, each strategy includes further information, practical examples, or a reproducible designed to aid teachers' implementation of the strategy.

## **Friendly Controversy**

Students explain and defend their positions on topics about which they disagree. The teacher asks students to follow specific guidelines when engaging in friendly controversy. Guidelines should be designed to ensure that students feel free to disagree with others but do so respectfully and allow for everyone to express their opinions.

### **Teacher Actions**

- Creating guidelines for friendly controversy activities to prevent negativity
- Asking students to express their opinions about topics and issues
- Asking students to defend their opinions about topics and issues

### **Desired Student Responses**

- Following guidelines for friendly controversy activities
- Expressing and defending their opinions about topics during friendly controversy activities
- Staying positive and respectful during friendly controversy activities

### **Extra Support**

- Asking a small group of students to demonstrate a discussion that follows friendly controversy guidelines and discussing the demonstration with the class

### **Extension**

- Asking students to conduct an investigation of a perspective they disagree with but are interested in



## Guidelines for Friendly Controversy

It's okay to disagree with your friends and classmates sometimes, as long as you are polite about it. Remember the following guidelines when engaging in friendly controversy.

- You may criticize ideas but not people.
- When you state your opinion, try to provide evidence or reasons for it.
- Even if you are anxious to say something, give others the chance to finish speaking.
- As others speak, listen with the intent to understand why they think their opinion is accurate, rather than just waiting for your turn to talk.
- Speak calmly and respectfully. Avoid raising your voice or using a rude tone.
- Ask questions if you do not understand another person's point.
- Disagree using respectful language and explain why you disagree.
- Be willing to take responsibility for your interactions.

## **Class Vote**

Students vote on a particular issue. Before and after the vote, students discuss the merits of various positions. The teacher might ask students to vote again after the final discussion. To incorporate movement, the teacher might ask students to stand on a particular side of the classroom to represent their initial vote. Undecided students stand in the middle of the room. After each side presents arguments for their point of view, students have the opportunity to switch sides, and the teacher asks undecided students to make a decision.

### **Teacher Actions**

- Asking students to vote about a topic or issue
- Asking students to discuss the merits of various perspectives about a topic or issue
- Incorporating movement by having students move to a specific area of the room based on how they voted

### **Desired Student Responses**

- Explaining why they voted for or against a topic or issue
- Describing alternative perspectives from their own about a topic or issue

### **Extra Support**

- Providing background knowledge about an issue before asking students to vote

### **Extension**

- Asking students who were initially undecided or who changed their position about an issue to explain what convinced them to change their mind

### **Technology Tips**

- Use clickers with text input or polling software on students' mobile devices to submit anonymous votes on a controversial subject. Ask the class to discuss their positions and provide guiding questions during this discussion. At the end of the discussion, ask students to vote again. Analyze the data from the preliminary and post-discussion votes as a class.

# Class Vote Tracking Sheet

Topic of vote: \_\_\_\_\_

## Initial Vote

<i>Options</i>				
<i>Number of Votes</i>				

Record important points raised during class discussion of the topic.

## Final Vote

<i>Options</i>				
<i>Number of Votes</i>				

What changed between the two votes? Why?

## **Seminars**

In groups, students explore a text, video, or other resource that expresses highly opinionated perspectives about a key issue or topic related to the curriculum content. Groups contain three to five members with specific roles, such as moderator, recorder, time keeper, synthesizer, and group representative. After discussion in small groups, the whole class joins together to discuss. All groups might explore the same resource or each group might investigate a different perspective on the same topic.

### **Teacher Actions**

- Asking students to review a text, video, or other resource that presents an opinion or perspective about a topic or issue
- Organizing students in groups of three to five
- Designating roles in each group
- Asking each group to discuss the opinions or perspectives presented in the text, video, or other resource

### **Desired Student Responses**

- Explaining the expectations for their roles in a seminar group
- Fulfilling the expectations for their roles in a seminar group
- Respectfully discussing the opinions and perspectives presented in a text, video, or other resource

### **Extra Support**

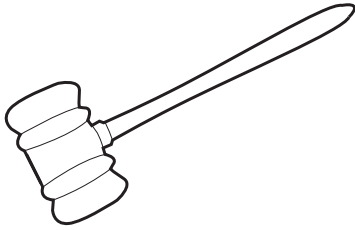
- Helping students summarize the text, video, or other resource being discussed before the seminar

### **Extension**

- Asking students to investigate questions that arose but were not answered in their seminar groups

## Seminar Job Cards

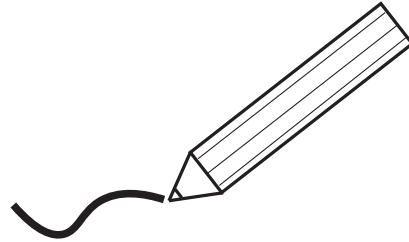
Name: \_\_\_\_\_



### Moderator

It's my job to lead the discussion and make sure everyone has a chance to speak.

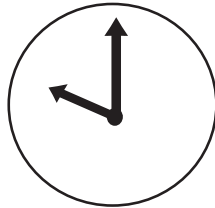
Name: \_\_\_\_\_



### Recorder

It's my job to write down the important points in our discussion.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



### Time Keeper

It's my job to make sure we stay on topic and have enough time to finish our assignment.

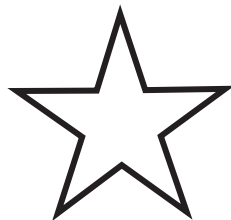
Name: \_\_\_\_\_



### Summarizer

It's my job to summarize what everyone has said.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



### Group Representative

It's my job to share our group's results and conclusions with the whole class.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Expert Opinions**

Students research the opinions of experts who hold contrasting perspectives and points of view about a particular issue or topic. The teacher might use this strategy in a cooperative jigsaw where students each research a particular researcher or thought leader and then report back to the whole group about what they discovered. The class then discusses the merits of the various perspectives and the validity (or lack thereof) of a particular thinker's ideas, positions, and evidence.

### **Teacher Actions**

- Asking students to research experts' opinions about a topic or issue
- Discussing the merits and validity of various perspectives about a topic or issue

### **Desired Student Responses**

- Accurately summarizing an expert's opinion about a topic or issue
- Explaining the strengths and weaknesses of an expert's opinion

### **Extra Support**

- Giving students background knowledge about different experts before asking them to select one to research

### **Extension**

- Asking students to compare their own ideas and positions with an expert's ideas and positions on an issue

## Expert Opinions Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

People who are experts on this topic:

Select one expert to research in more depth.

This person is an expert on this topic because:

Record this person's ideas, opinions, or position on the topic. Be sure to include a source for each piece of information you write down.

## **Opposite Point of View**

Students defend the opposite point of view from the one they agree with or support. This can help students with overly dogmatic or rigid attitudes explore the nuances of a particular topic or issue and can reinforce the process of providing evidence to support a claim.

### **Teacher Actions**

- Asking students to express their opinions about a topic or issue
- Asking students to identify and defend the opposite opinion from their own on a topic or issue

### **Desired Student Responses**

- Expressing their opinions about topics and issues
- Defending the opposite opinion from their own on a topic or issue

### **Extra Support**

- Having students interview or talk to someone with a point of view that is the opposite of their own

### **Extension**

- Having students identify and compare several different points of view that are different from their own



## Opposite Point of View Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

What I believe about this topic:

A point of view different from my own:

Reasons and evidence that support this point of view:

## **Diagramming Perspectives**

Students use a Venn diagram to compare various points of view. The diagram can highlight areas of congruence and areas of disagreement between two or three ideas.

### **Teacher Actions**

- Asking students to diagram two or three perspectives using a Venn diagram
- Discussing areas of congruence and disagreement

### **Desired Student Responses**

- Diagramming two or three perspectives using a Venn diagram
- Describing areas of congruence or disagreement between perspectives

### **Extra Support**

- Asking students to create a list of what they know about various points of view before creating a Venn diagram

### **Extension**

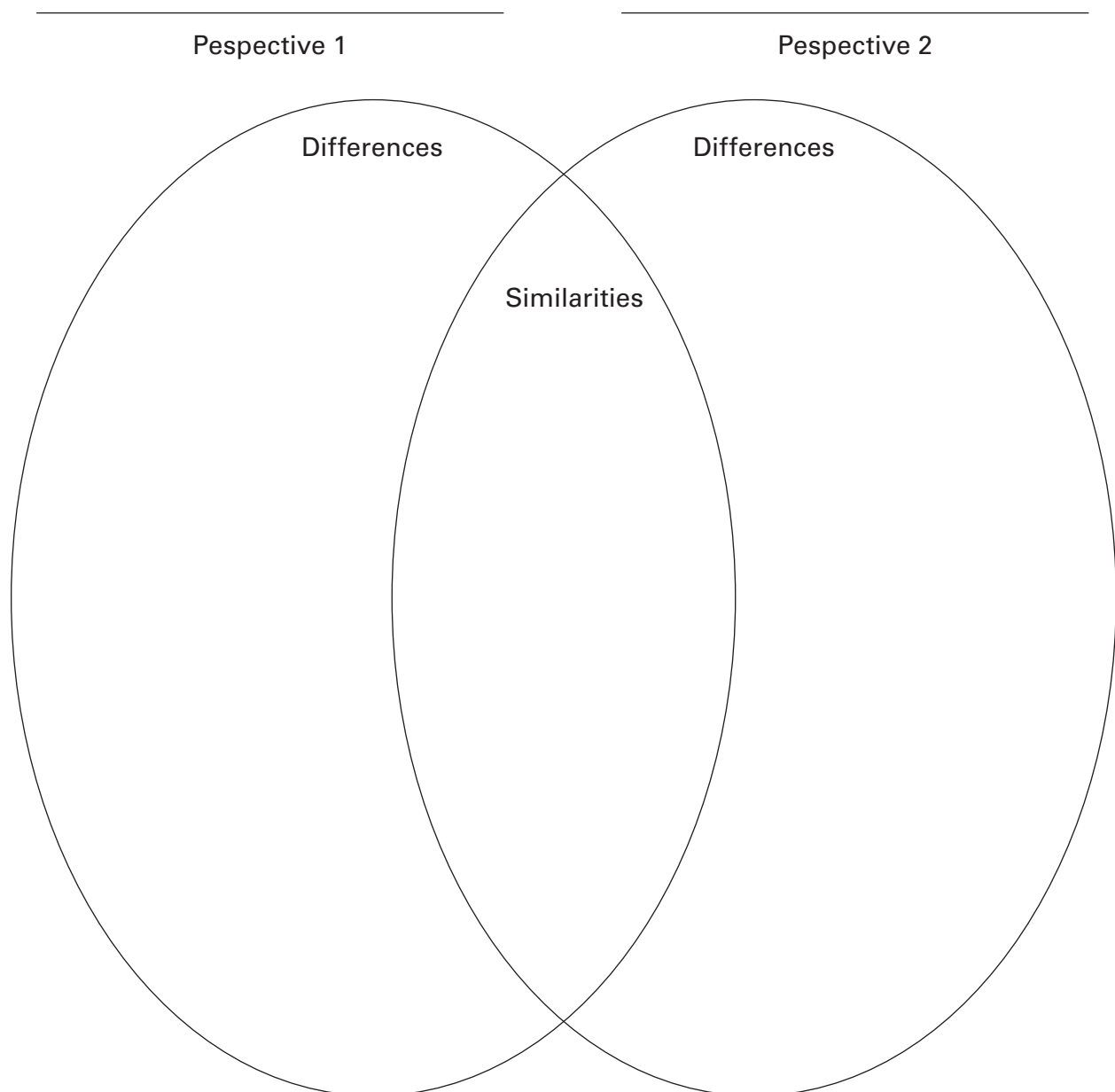
- Asking students to make generalizations about various points of view based on their Venn diagrams

## Diagramming Perspectives

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Use this Venn diagram to compare two perspectives on the same topic. Write descriptive words and phrases that are particular to one perspective in its circle. Where the circles overlap, write descriptions of what the perspectives have in common.



## **Lincoln-Douglas Debate**

Students practice assuming affirmative or negative positions on an issue and giving supporting evidence for their position. The teacher chooses two teams to debate opposing sides of a specific policy or issue. One side argues in favor of the policy or issue (affirmative team) and the other side argues against it (negative team). Each side gets the opportunity to make an opening argument, cross-examine the opposing side, and present a rebuttal. After the debate, each team evaluates their performance as a group, and students self-evaluate their own performance as a member of the team.

### **Teacher Actions**

- Explaining the parts of a Lincoln-Douglas debate to students (opening argument, cross-examination, rebuttal)
- Separating students into two teams and asking one team to argue for a policy or issue and the other to argue against the policy or issue
- Debriefing with students after the debate

### **Desired Student Responses**

- Understanding the different parts of a Lincoln-Douglas debate
- Following the rules and procedures for a Lincoln-Douglas debate
- Preparing arguments for or against an issue
- Participating fully and respectfully in Lincoln-Douglas debates

### **Extra Support**

- Taking students on a virtual or real-life field trip that highlights the policy or issue that will be the subject of a debate

### **Extension**

- Asking students to predict the consequences of adopting a policy or a position on an issue that is the subject of a debate

### **Technology Tips**

- Students can use videoconferencing tools such as Skype to engage in virtual debates with other classrooms, either within the same school or in another school.

## Debate Reflection Guide

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

**Complete this section by discussing the prompts and questions with your team.**

Summarize your team's argument.

Summarize the other team's argument.

How well did your team prepare for the debate?

How well did your team respond to and refute the other team's points?

What was the best thing your team did?

What is something your team could do better next time?

Complete this section on your own.

What was your role on the team?

How well did you prepare for your role?

How well did you execute your role?

What was the best thing you did?

What is something you could do better next time?

How well did your team work together as a whole?

## **Town Hall Meeting**

This strategy was originally developed by Diana Hess in the book *Controversy in the Classroom: The Democratic Power of Discussion* (2009).

To help students see a complex issue from multiple perspectives, the teacher facilitates a discussion among several parties with varying perspectives, as might be seen in a local town hall meeting. First, designate specific roles that students assume during a town hall meeting. Roles can be based on the people or groups most likely to have strong opinions about an issue or most likely to be affected by a new policy or change in existing policy. The students participate in an open discussion while the teacher mediates. Students stay in character for their respective roles and argue from that point of view for the duration of the discussion. The students then participate in a debriefing in which they evaluate their own performances and the discussion as a whole.

### **Teacher Actions**

- Identifying various perspectives on an issue and the roles of people who might hold them
- Assigning specific roles for students to assume during the town hall meeting
- Mediating a discussion where students stay in character for their assigned role
- Debriefing with students after the town hall meeting

### **Desired Student Responses**

- Defending the perspective of their assigned role during a town hall meeting
- Staying in character for their roles
- Explaining how their personal perspective differs from their role in a town hall meeting

### **Extra Support**

- Inviting guest speakers who have strong opinions on the subject of an upcoming town hall meeting to speak to the class

### **Extension**

- Asking students to predict the consequences of a new policy or a change in policy that is the subject of a town hall meeting

## Town Hall Meeting Planning Guide

Topic for town hall meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

Constituent groups that would be concerned about this issue:

Students assigned to each group:

How the discussion will be structured:



## **Legal Model**

This strategy was originally developed by Diana Hess in the book *Controversy in the Classroom: The Democratic Power of Discussion* (2009).

Students critically examine how Supreme Court decisions affect policy as they form their opinions and arguments based on textual evidence from past Supreme Court cases. Each student completes a “ticket” or outline of the essential arguments that each Supreme Court justice made in the case being studied. Students must complete their tickets in order to participate in the discussion and may use them throughout the discussion as a reference guide. The teacher leads a discussion of the case being studied. Using questions that focus on the facts, opinions, and ideas of the case, the teacher helps students articulate their arguments based on the textual evidence they have read. At the end, students participate in a debriefing to evaluate their individual and group performance.

### **Teacher Actions**

- Selecting a Supreme Court decision that relates to the content
- Asking students to review the opinions and arguments in the case and create an outline of the key ideas of each justice about the case
- Leading a discussion about the case and asking questions to help students focus on different aspects of the case
- Helping students articulate their personal opinions and arguments about the case
- Debriefing with students after the legal model discussion

### **Desired Student Responses**

- Creating tickets that summarize the key ideas of each justice in a Supreme Court case
- Articulating their personal opinions and arguments about a case
- Explaining how the legal model helped them look at an issue or topic from different perspectives

### **Extra Support**

- Explaining the stories behind legal cases that will be the focus of legal model discussions (What conflict caused the case? How did lower courts rule? Why did the Supreme Court agree to hear the case?)

### **Extension**

- Asking students to investigate the consequences of the Supreme Court’s ruling in a case

## Legal Model Planning Guide

Name, number, and year of case: \_\_\_\_\_

Topic of case: \_\_\_\_\_

How this case relates to the content students are learning:

What are the facts of this case?

What are the opinions involved in this case?

What are the important ideas exemplified by this case?

What aspects of the case will I ask student to focus on during discussion?

## REPRODUCIBLES

Teachers can use the following reproducibles to monitor their implementation of this element. The reproducible titled Tracking Progress Over Time helps teachers set goals related to their proficiency with this element and track their progress toward these goals over the course of a unit, semester, or year. Tracking Teacher Actions and Tracking Student Responses allow observers in classrooms to monitor specific teacher and student behavior related to this element. Teachers themselves can also use the Tracking Student Responses reproducible to document instances of student behaviors during class. The Strategy Reflection Log provides teachers a space to write down their thoughts and reflect on the implementation process for specific strategies related to this element. Finally, this section provides both a student survey and a teacher survey, the results of which provide feedback about teachers' proficiency with this element.

# Tracking Progress Over Time

Use this worksheet to set a goal for your use of this element, make a plan for increasing your mastery, and chart your progress toward your goal.

Element: \_\_\_\_\_

Initial Score: \_\_\_\_\_

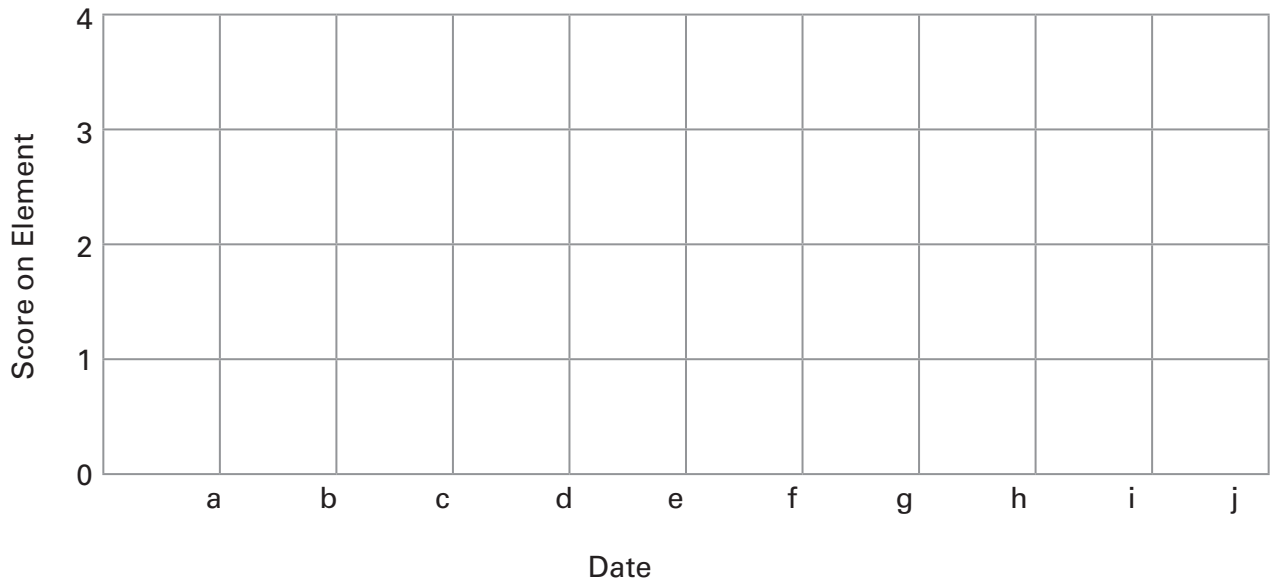
Goal Score: \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

Specific things I am going to do to improve: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



a. \_\_\_\_\_

f. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

g. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

h. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

i. \_\_\_\_\_

e. \_\_\_\_\_

j. \_\_\_\_\_

## Tracking Teacher Actions

During an observation, the observer can use this form to record the teacher's usage of strategies related to the element of using friendly controversy.

Observation Date and Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Length of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_

Check Strategies You Intend to Use	Strategies	Description of What Was Observed
	Friendly Controversy	
	Class Vote	
	Seminars	
	Expert Opinions	
	Opposite Point of View	
	Diagramming Perspectives	
	Lincoln-Douglas Debate	
	Town Hall Meeting	
	Legal Model	
	Other:	
	Other:	

## Tracking Student Responses

A teacher or observer can use this worksheet to record instances of student behavior to inform planning and implementation of strategies associated with using friendly controversy. Any item followed by an asterisk is an example of undesirable behavior related to the element; the teacher should look for a decrease in the number of instances of these items.

Observation Date and Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Length of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_

Behavior	Number of Instances
Appearing more engaged during friendly controversy activities	
Expressing their perspective or opinion	
Supporting opinions with reasons and evidence	
Considering various perspectives	
Rejecting other viewpoints*	
Interacting respectfully	
Exhibiting disrespect during discussions*	
Other:	
Other:	

## Strategy Reflection Log

Use this worksheet to select a strategy, set a goal, and reflect on your use of that strategy.

Element: \_\_\_\_\_

Strategy: \_\_\_\_\_

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date	How did it go?

## Student Survey for Using Friendly Controversy

**1. My teacher encourages me to disagree with other students in a respectful way.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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**2. My teacher asks us to talk about our opinions in class.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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**3. My teacher is comfortable with respectful disagreement.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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**4. I never feel threatened or disrespected because of my thoughts, ideas, and opinions.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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**5. My teacher encourages me to question my opinions and other people's opinions.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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**6. It is okay for me to disagree with my teacher or my classmates.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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## Teacher Survey for Using Friendly Controversy

**1. I provide structured opportunities for students to engage with conflicting perspectives on a topic.**

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree  
Nor Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

**2. I encourage students to express their opinions on a topic during class.**

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree  
Nor Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

**3. I directly teach my students how to disagree respectfully.**

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree  
Nor Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

**4. I help students see an issue from perspectives other than their own.**

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree  
Nor Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

**5. My students are more engaged when I use friendly controversy.**

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree  
Nor Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

**6. My students understand the content better when I use friendly controversy.**

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree  
Nor Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

**7. My students would describe my class as a safe environment in which they can express their own opinions.**

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree  
Nor Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree