**8th Grade Debate Topics**

**a. Do (violent) video games negatively influence behavior in youth who frequently play them? (Yes vs. No)**

i. Some people are concerned that repeated exposure to violence through violent video games often cause gamers to become desensitized to the violence and perhaps encourage violence because of feelings of excitement. Do you agree or disagree?

ii. Some people believe that video games, actually aid in the development of higher order thinking and motor skills, such as strategizing and logical thinking, as well as advanced coordination. Defend or refute such claims.

iii. Should access to violent games be further restricted to gamers under 18 or 21 be implemented through stricter regulations?

iv. Should there be limitations to the content which video game designers are allowed to produce?

**b. Is the prevalence of social media affecting face-to-face human interaction? or Should there be fewer or more restrictions for teens to partake in social media sites?**

i. With the increase of cyber-bullying and other dangerous online activities, has the Internet become a dangerous place for teens?

ii. Social media has made communication much more efficient, immediate and versatile. Students may often use social media to also seek academic help. Would restricting access to social media hinder this benefit of social media?

iii. Parents are concerned about their children’s online safety and often feel there is a need for stricter regulations by the sites themselves to protect children. Is it difficult for parents to monitor their teen’s activities on social media sites? Should it be the responsibility of the site, the parents, or teens themselves to ensure their protection?

iv. Should teens be held responsible for their activity online?

v. Has human-to-human interaction diminished as a result of social networking sites? Have people just gotten lazier with their relationships as a result of social media?

vi. Do people have an inflated or a shallow sense of friendships/relationships as a result of social media?

vii. Does online activity on social media affect the dynamics of a personal relationship?

**c. Should genetic engineering in food be banned?**

i. Genetic engineering allows farmers to increase crop and meat production or allow their supplies to last longer. Do the economic benefits of genetically engineering food outweigh the health concerns?

ii. Because of their tendency to stay preserved longer and are typically available in larger quantities or sizes, does genetically engineered food provide a viable and appropriate solution for food shortages, especially in famine stricken or underdeveloped countries?

iii. Some genetically engineered food has been linked to some health risks, including cancer. Are there significant health risks to genetically engineered food? If so, is it morally responsible to still allow the practice of genetic engineering in food?

iv. There are alternatives to genetically engineered food. However, sometimes labelling, or lack thereof, may be misleading. Should there be more regulations as to how food is labeled? Should organic food cost the same as GE food?

**d. With the increase of diabetes and other weight-related health risks, should there be restrictions to the production, distribution, and access to junk foods?**

i. Some states, like New York, have proposed (and accepted) laws that would place greater taxes on junk food or have banned extra large quantities/sizes of junk food or highly sugary beverages in order to discourage overconsumption of these unhealthy foods. Should such legal restrictions be allowed? Is this within the rights of government? Is this a good or a bad idea?

ii. Most schools now have policies that only permit serving healthy, nutritious foods to students. Some have even disallowed the presence of vending machines which make junk food more easily accessible. Is this a beneficial policy or is it an unnecessary measure? Should good nutrition be the responsibility of parents and students, or is it part of a school’s responsibility?

iii. Often, those people who are economically disadvantaged, may be able to afford only food that is often classified as “junk” food because these foods tend to be somewhat inexpensive. Would increasing restrictions on junk food only be harder on people who may be dependent on these food sources or is it for their benefit as well? What alternative solutions may there be?

iv. Is it ethically and morally responsible for companies to manufacture and produce “junk” food?

v. Should there be stricter requirements as to the nutritive contents of junk food items?

**e. Is America still a dominant global leader in Education?**

i. As the economy continues to become increasingly globally interconnected, is it necessary that America remains a global leader in education or should the approach to education also be more globally incorporated?

ii. Is a country’s educational success really tied to their economical success?

iii. Is America really falling behind in their educational achievements, particularly in the STEM fields?

iv. America is still home to a majority of the world’s top universities and colleges. Is this a strong indicator of America’s educational standing in the global context? However, are American students, even those who graduate from these universities, are they still able to compete with the rigor of the demands within and outside the United States as well?

v. What improvements or reforms can be made to the American education system?

**f. Should America tap into its own natural oil reserves as opposed to depending on foreign oil?**

i. What is America’s dependency on foreign oil?

ii. As international conflicts continue over foreign oil, should America still partake in trade of foreign oil? Is it economically advantageous? Does it cause other troubles?

iii. Drilling for oil in America’s own reserves might be dangerous to the natural environment around the reserves. Should this be a consideration that’s taken into account? Is it more important to preserve the environment or to supply an ever-growing American population with a vital natural resource?

iv. Would tapping into America’s natural oil reserves cause other problems and affect other industries that may depend on those lands too?

v. What other alternatives besides homeland natural reserves and foreign supplies might there be? (Should there be a movement towards alternative fuels?)