**Introduction to the Academic Argument Model [KEY]**

**1.**

**Argumentative Claim:** American middle and high schools should use a year-round calendar.

**Evidence:** Other developed nations that have a year-round calendar do significantly better on both math and reading in 6th – 12th grades than the United States does on the Program for International Assessment (PISA) testing done every three years, according to the 2016 report produced by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

**Reasoning: Since the purpose of school is to improve students’ academic performance, and prepare them for college and life beyond college, academic testing data results should often guide policy. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that all of the countries that have year-round school have higher test results on the PISA. These results mean that the U.S. should at least try out a year-round school year like these other countries have.**

**2.**

**Argumentative Claim:** The 2017 horror movie “It,” based on the Stephen King novel, does not deserve an R rating.

**Evidence:** **“It” does have a whole lot of scary scenes, and the characters in the movie do swear on average about once every five minutes. But “It” doesn’t have any scenes involving inappropriate, “mature” boy-girl stuff.**

**Reasoning:** R ratings should be reserved for movies with inappropriate scenes – nudity, etc. Scary subject matter is OK for kids to see or read. After all, Halloween is one of our country’s favorite holidays, and it’s almost made for kids. Halloween is nothing but scary stuff. Profanity is also pretty common, and even if kids shouldn’t swear, the use of swear words in a movie shouldn’t mean kids cannot see it.

Build an argument that addresses this question: Is your school an excellent school?

**3.**

**Argumentative Claim:** **Our school [fill in the school’s name] is an excellent school because it has exceptionally good teachers.**

**Evidence:** **A majority (60%) of teachers at [fill in the school’s name] have either graduate degrees or National Board Certification. Almost every teacher either runs an after-school club or coaches a sports team. Nearly 100% of our teachers attend parent night and other special events at the school. And student surveys last year found that 78% of our teachers received a “very good” or “outstanding” rating.**

**Reasoning:** **Evaluating how good teachers are is a complex thing to do. One measurement, though, is how advanced teachers’ own education is. Our teachers have advanced degrees and learning. Another important factor is how much they care and are willing to do everything they can for students. An indicator here is running clubs and teams. Almost all of our teachers show in this way that they care about us. And, in the end, students may be the best judge of teachers. Students here rate our teachers very highly.**

**4.**

**Argumentative Claim:** **Sweetened beverage taxes do not achieve their goal of improved public health.**

**Evidence:** According to a study published in the spring of 2017 on its website, the non-profit Better Government Agency showed that while sweetened beverage taxes in large cities like New York and Philadelphia do reduce consumption of soda somewhat, sales of sweetened beverages have remained at about 90% of their pre-tax levels. Further, Temple University nutritionist Terry Franzelle recently wrote as part of an essay in the Philadelphia Inquirer (August 3, 2017), “Sweetened beverages are often only one part of a diet that is has too much sugar in it. Candies, cookies, sweetened snacks, other desserts, even fruit juices and many breads and starches – these all make up the vast majority of sugar intake in Americans’ diets, especially Americans who are overweight.”

**Reasoning:** Since sweetened beverage taxes only reduce soda consumption by 10%, they cannot really be considered successful in improving public health. People continue to drink almost all of the soda they did before the tax, they simply have the government to do so. And experts in nutrition and diet seem to suggest that even if people stop drinking soda, they consume all kinds of sugar-heavy foods in their diet. The sweetened beverage tax is too narrow to make people healthier, even if it achieved its immediate objective of getting people to drink less soda.

**5.**

**Argumentative Claim:** Today, many young people are addicted to their cell phones in the same way that people can become addicted to cigarettes or drugs.

**Evidence:** **Surveys done by the Pew Research Center in 2015 show that American 6th – 12th graders check their phones on average of more than 150 times per day, often times when they know it is not appropriate (for example, during classroom activities or tests, and during family meals). More than 75% of these teens admit that they often have feelings of having lost control over when they check their phones, and 68% agree with the statement, “My phone has more control over me than I have over my phone.”**

**Reasoning:** **Addicts are defined by having lost control over the behavior that they are addicted to. That is what makes someone addicted to cigarettes or drugs: they feel like they have to smoke or take the drug whether or not they want to. So if young people don’t have control over their cell phone use, they are addicted to their phones. Also, addicts do their behavior in a self-destructive way. Similarly, young people are using cell phones in a way that is harming their education and family relationships, according to Pew.**

**6.**

**Argumentative Claim:** Hurricanes Harvey and Irma demonstrate that America is indeed living up to its basic values as a nation.

**Evidence:** **“Houston Chief of Police Art Acevedo was among those who said the state's mythic toughness would help Texans soldier on. 'It's sad,' Chief Acevedo said. 'It breaks your heart for our city and our state. But it's Texas. I know that people here will get through because our department has logged more than 1,000 separate incidences of Houstans protecting and preserving themselves and their property from this hurricane over the past week.'" (New York Times, August 27, 2017).**

**Reasoning:** The police chief of Houston, the city centrally impacted by Harvey, is in a good position to see the "mythic toughness" and self-reliance of the individuals in his community. When he says that his department witnessed and supported more than 1,000 separate incidents of people taking their initiative to save themselves, their family or their property, this is a significant observation. And self-reliance is a value that is fundamental to America throughout its history, from the Revolution of 1776, when colonists wanted to exist separate from powerful Great Britain, through Westward Expansion, even the Civil War and tough periods of the 20th century.