

FEBRUARY 2024

# CRITICAL THINKING NOODLER



## Pros and Cons

*News from Friday, January 19th*

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Some students in Ohio may soon have a unique money-making opportunity: lawmakers are considering paying students to attend school. The plan is meant to reduce chronic absenteeism. If approved, a pilot program would test the effectiveness of this strategy for kindergarteners and ninth graders in a handful of Ohio schools. Students would be split into groups, some of whom would get paid \$25 for every two weeks of "high attendance," while others would not be paid. At the end of the study, organizers would compare attendance rates between those who received money for coming to school, and those who simply showed up because they wanted to learn..

What are the pros and cons of paying students to attend school? Write a list of at least two benefits of this plan and two downsides. Then, share your opinion: should kids be paid to go to school?

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## Make a Pitch!

*News from Friday, January 19th*

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Lexington, Kentucky has an unusual new plan to boost tourism by attracting visitors from outer space. After recent government hearings discussed the potential existence of UFOs, the city's Convention and Visitor Bureau decided to beam an invitation into space. Using a coded bitmap image, the message advertised the rolling hills and horse farms of central Kentucky. The Bureau hoped to reach extraterrestrials in the TRAPPIST-1 solar system, which, according to the Associated Press, is thought to be home to "potentially habitable planets." It will take 40 years for the message to reach its destination, and at least another 40 for any response to make its way back.

How would you encourage extraterrestrial visitors to make the trek to your state? Make a pitch for any potential otherworldly residents of TRAPPIST-1 to choose your state over any other place on Earth as their destination. Include at least three reasons that your state would be an appealing place to visit.

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## If You Ran Things

News from Wednesday, January 24th

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The Federal Highway Administration is encouraging states to tone down the humor when it comes to message boards. Many states have taken to posting funny safety warnings, with quips like Massachusetts' "Use Yah Blinker" and New Jersey's "Hocus Pocus, Drive With Focus." Now, the agency's guidelines say that all signs should be simple, brief, direct, and clear — meaning no jokes and no pop-culture references.

Imagine that you were in charge of highway message boards. How would you encourage people to drive safely? Would you use humor to catch people's attention, or would you keep it simple? Write a set of guidelines for what sort of messages should be posted and what shouldn't. Be sure to explain the "why" behind your rules, and include examples of messages that are allowed.

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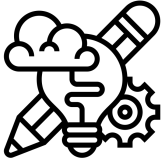
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## Design It!

*News from Friday, January 12th*

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Kathleen Murray of Sandford, Tasmania recently won the proud distinction of having the “World’s Ugliest Lawn.” The contest, created by Swedish organizers with the backing of actress Shailene Woodley, was meant to raise awareness about the high water requirements of lush green lawns. The hope was that the photos of untended, unwatered lawns that organizers received from all over the world would inspire water conservation and encourage people to find alternatives to water-intensive grass yards.

Design your own version of the “World’s Ugliest Lawn.” Consider how you might make the yard environmentally friendly and appealing to local animals, all without requiring a lot of water.

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## Get in Their Head

*News from Friday, January 26th*

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102-year-old Bindy Gralow from Virginia recently fulfilled a bucket list wish: to zip around the Richmond Raceway at 103 miles per hour — her age “plus one for good measure,” according to the Richmond Times-Dispatch. Gralow, who rode in the passenger seat of a pace car for five loops around the track, says her love of racing began when her parents took her to watch motorcycle races at a course in Scotland. It was only one of many adventures in her lifetime, including hiking in the Himalayas at age 80.

Imagine what it was like for Gralow to ride around the Richmond Raceway at top speed. Write a short diary entry from her point of view describing the experience. Be sure to include how she might have felt and what she would have seen.

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## Pros and Cons

*News from Monday, January 22nd*

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Students in one Graham, North Carolina middle school might notice something missing from their bathrooms. As a response to students skipping class to film TikTok videos, Southern Alamance removed all mirrors, which were often heavily featured in the posts. A spokesperson for the school says the change is working: kids are taking fewer, shorter bathroom breaks.

What are the pros and cons of removing mirrors from school bathrooms? Write a list of at least two benefits of this plan and two downsides. Then, share your opinion: should school bathrooms have mirrors?

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