

MARCH 2024

CRITICAL THINKING NOODLER



Pros and Cons

News from Monday, February 12th

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Some Florida students will be spending this summer somewhere unexpected: in school. As part of an effort to overcome “summer slumps” in learning, three school districts in the state plan to test out a year-round calendar for the next four years. Students will still attend school for 180 days, but their twelve weeks of vacation will be spread out throughout the year. The change will be piloted first with younger students, who are thought to be most likely to benefit from the new academic schedule.

What are the pros and cons of year-round school? Write a list of at least two benefits and two downsides. Then, share your opinion: should your school district have a year-round calendar?

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Test It!

News from Wednesday, February 7th

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A recent survey shows that America has a new favorite pastime: football. The Pew Research Center asked twelve-thousand people, "If you had to choose one sport as being 'America's sport,' even if you don't personally follow it, which sport would it be?" More than half of respondents chose football, which took the top spot across every demographic, including race, age, and gender. The next most popular response was baseball, picked by 27% of people asked, while less than 10% chose basketball, soccer, car racing, or hockey, respectively.

Think of a poll question that you would like to ask about your hometown, state, or country; for instance, the animal, flower, or food they consider the most representative. Design a survey to capture responses. Then, give the survey to as many people as possible. Be sure to try to capture responses from people of many ages, races, and genders. Finally, describe what you learned from your survey. Did the results surprise you? Why or why not?

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If You Ran Things

News from Wednesday, February 21st

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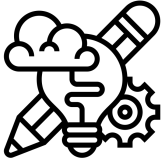
Tourists visiting Hawaii may soon face a new fee: a 25-dollar climate tax. If Hawaii's government passes the tax, the state will use the funds to preserve the state's beaches and prevent wildfires. Hawaii's new measure would not be the first of its kind. Popular vacation destinations around the world such as Greece, Italy, the Galapagos Islands, and New Zealand require visitors to pay similar fees, ranging from one dollar to one hundred dollars.

Imagine that you were in charge of a city or state that relies on tourism. How would you balance between attracting visitors and protecting the environment? Would you charge visitors a fee? If so, would you use the funds for? If not, what other strategies would you use to encourage sustainable tourism? Write your plan in the space below. Be sure to explain why it's the right approach.

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Design It!

News from Friday, February 23rd

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Plant lovers in the U.S. have something new to add to their gardens: glow-in-the-dark plants. Geneticists have modified a petunia plant to have a quality known as bioluminescence, which is common in fireflies, marine life, and some mushrooms. The scientists got the petunias to 'light up' by transferring four genes from bioluminescent mushrooms. The Department of Agriculture deemed the plants safe, and they are now available for purchase.

Imagine that you are a researcher looking to make the next major genetic modification to a plant. What quality would you want the plant to have, and why? Draw a diagram of your genetically modified plant in the space below. Be sure to show what lifeform the new genes came from and how the plant has changed.

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Expand It!

News from Wednesday, February 7th

[Listen to the Episode >](#)

A new Peanuts television special is righting a historical wrong. Made in 1973, “A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving” shows a black character, Franklin, sitting alone at the dinner table, opposite all his white friends. The new special, called “Snoopy Presents: Welcome Home, Franklin” shares Franklin’s backstory as a military kid who’s new in town, trying to make friends. Created by Craig Schulz, the son of the original Peanuts creator, the revised show has gained popularity amongst fans and television critics alike.

Think about your favorite books, movies, or TV shows. Do they include diverse characters of different backgrounds? How are those characters portrayed? In the space below, make a list of examples that represent diverse characters in respectful, inclusive ways, OR share how some movies, TV shows, or books could do a better job of representing diverse characters.

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