The role of discussion in supporting Academically Productive Talk (APT)

The plan for the panel

- Why discussion in classrooms?
- Why did we develop Word Generation?
- How does it work?
- Adapting Word Generation for use in Mexico
- Adapting Word Generation for use in Brazil
- Another form of support for APT: https://www.academically-productive-talk.org/

Well established fact

Classrooms with more discussion generate higher scores on literacy outcomes

Evidence concerning the role of discussion: Effect sizes

	Comprehension	Critical thinking
Collaborative Reasoning	**0.262**	**2.465**
Philosophy for Children	**0.333**	**0.236**
Paideia		
Questioning the Author	**-0.205**	**2.499**
Instructional Conversations	**2.798**	
Junior Great Books	**0.333**	**0.718**
Literature Circles	0.426	
Grand Conversations		
Book Club		

Well established fact

Discussion in classrooms is extremely rare

One possible solution: Curricular supports for discussion

- Engaging and discussable dilemmas
- Information to support claims about those dilemmas
- Activities and participation structures that authorize student voice
- All related to authentic literacy experiences – reading and writing to learn and communicate, not to practice reading and writing

Word Generation as one approach

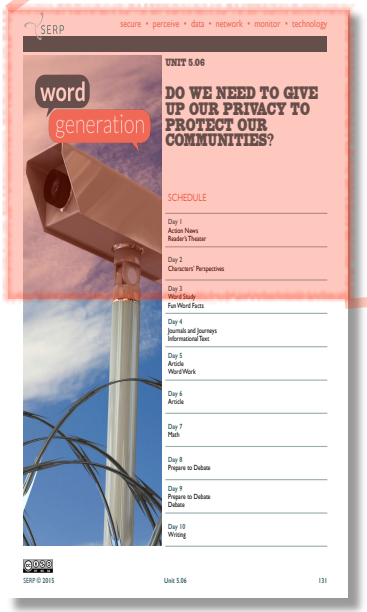
What does it look like?

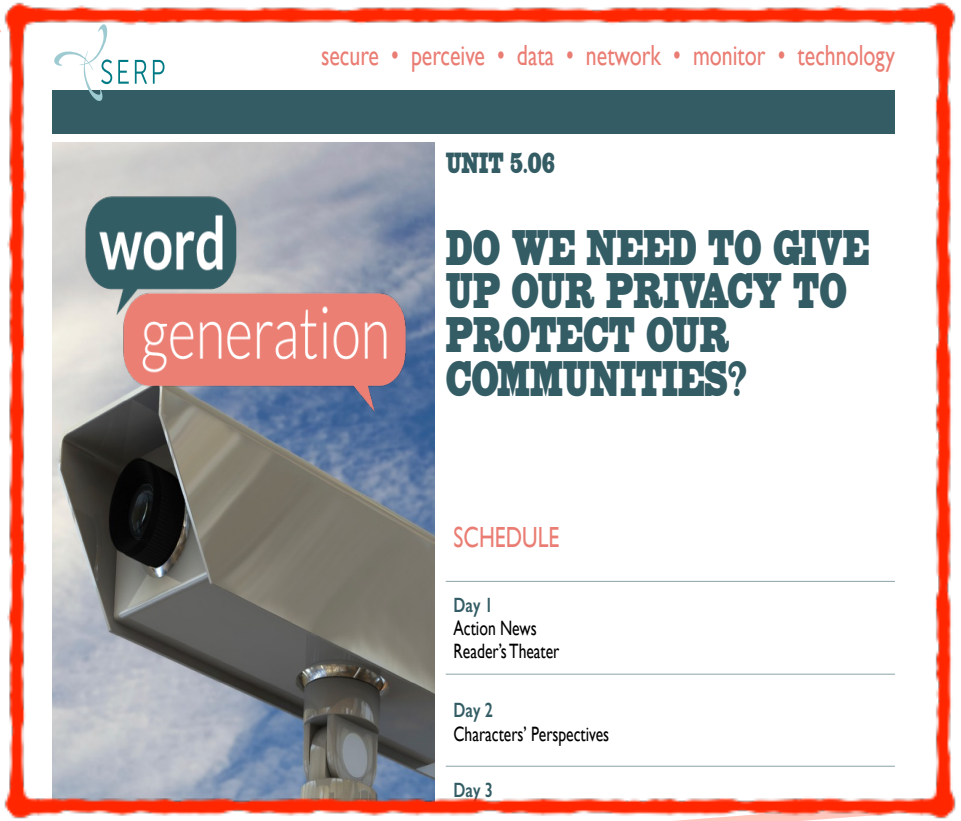
How does it work?

Theory of Change

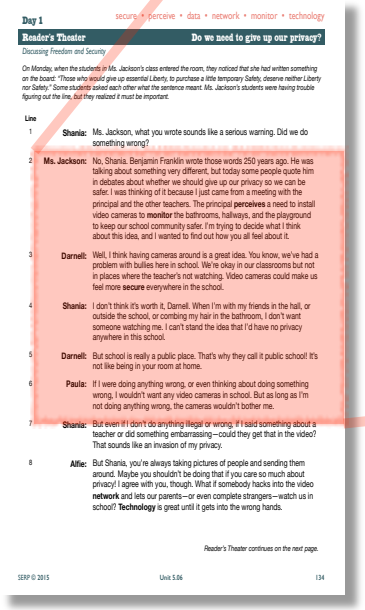
- Engaging students in controversial issues

- WG units link controversial topics to students' lives





- WG activities present material in a meaningful and engaging way that helps students understand how it is of value to them



Day 1 — secure • perceive • data • network • monitor • technology

Reader's Theater — Do we need to give up our privacy?

Discussing Freedom and Security

On Monday, when the students in Ms. Jackson's class entered the room, they noticed that she had written something on the board: "Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety." Some students asked each other what the sentence meant. Ms. Jackson's students were having trouble figuring out the line, but they realized it must be important.

Line

1 **Shania:** Ms. Jackson, what you wrote sounds like a serious warning. Did we do something wrong?

2 **Ms. Jackson:** No, Shania. Benjamin Franklin wrote those words 250 years ago. He was talking about something very different, but today some people quote him in debates about whether we should give up our privacy so we can be safer. I was thinking of it because I just came from a meeting with the principal and the other teachers. The principal **perceives** a need to install video cameras to **monitor** the bathrooms, hallways, and the playground to keep our school community safer. I'm trying to decide what I think about this idea, and I wanted to find out how you all feel about it.

3 **Darnell:** Well, I think having cameras around is a great idea. You know, we've had a problem with bullies here in school. We're okay in our classrooms but not in places where the teacher's not watching. Video cameras could make us feel more **secure** everywhere in the school.

4 **Shania:** I don't think it's worth it, Darnell. When I'm with my friends in the hall, or outside the school, or combing my hair in the bathroom, I don't want someone watching me. I can't stand the idea that I'd have no privacy anywhere in this school.

5 **Darnell:** But school is really a public place. That's why they call it public school! It's not like being in your room at home.

6 **Paula:** If I were doing anything wrong, or even thinking about doing something wrong, I wouldn't want any video cameras in school. But as long as I'm not doing anything wrong, the cameras wouldn't bother me.

7 **Shania:** But even if I don't do anything illegal or wrong, if I said something about a teacher or did something embarrassing—could they get that in the video? That sounds like an invasion of my privacy.

8 **Alfie:** But Shania, you're always taking pictures of people and sending them around. Maybe you shouldn't be doing that if you care so much about privacy! I agree with you, though. What if somebody hacks into the video **network** and lets our parents—or even complete strangers—watch us in school? **Technology** is great until it gets into the wrong hands.

Reader's Theater continues on the next page.

SERP © 2015 — Unit 5.06 — 134

Session 1 — justify • monumental • surplus • architecture • infrastructure • hierarchy

Reader's Theater

Spending Priorities

Setting: The school bell just rang at Horace Mann Middle School, and two seventh-grade boys are waiting outside for their friends who took a detour to the restroom. The friends finally arrive.

Liam: The restrooms in this school are disgusting. The sinks are always clogged, there's graffiti everywhere, and some of the toilets don't even flush. The locks on the stalls are all broken. You have to be a gymnast to go to the bathroom and hold the door closed. But now our school is going to build a new swimming pool because they found some extra money? They've got a problem with priorities. They should ask us students how to spend this **surplus**!

Cyrus: And the worst of it, it's not just any swimming pool—they're talking about building the "best" swimming pool money can buy. How can they **justify** such a huge expense? I mean, it's not just the bathrooms that are falling apart. We've got classrooms with broken desks. We don't have art or music classes. I say spend the money on stuff we really need, not on a swimming pool.

Aaron: Dude, a pool would be awesome! We could finally have a place for the swim team other than the local YMCA. And we'd be able to practice every day. I'm tired of our school always being left out of the big sports competitions. I mean, we're really good! Parents would come, and we could charge them to watch us. Lots of people came to see us. I bet we could pay back the cost of the pool. That would **justify** the expense, wouldn't it?

Cyrus: Look, only a few kids would use the pool—the athletes. You guys already get all the special favors. I mean, in the school **hierarchy**, the principal and teachers might be at the top, but the athletes aren't far behind. This school supports athletes more than any other students. So, for those of us at the bottom, what good will a pool do us? Why not use the money to fix the bathrooms? Or get some art and music teachers, or hire after-school tutors so that other kids could get some support for a change?

Heather: I have to admit the bathrooms are gross, but a pool is a great idea. Besides, it's not just for the athletes, Cyrus. The whole town would have access to it for certain days and times. Swimming is super good for you, and if families had access to a heated pool, getting exercise would be easier. But most of all, the pool would put our school on the map. It just might be the best swimming pool ever built in the county!

Cyrus: Yeah, sure. Think about what the pharaohs said: Build me a huge pyramid so I can go on being a god and take care of you all even after I die. It will be good for you. But a lot of good all that **architecture** did the peasants! Pyramids, temples, fifty-foot statues—what a waste.

Aaron: Wait a minute, Cyrus. The Egyptians had a **surplus** so they weren't deciding between building a pyramid or going hungry. Remember Mr. Stokes going on about their land being so fertile they could grow more than enough to feed themselves? That **surplus** allowed them to do other creative things during the floods, like build great pyramids. And the pyramids are still one of the greatest wonders of the world. So what's the problem?

Cyrus: It was oppressive to make people build those pyramids, and it was a big waste of money. They should have built something else that everyone could have used.

Liam: I agree with Cyrus. They should have spent their money on what Mr. Stokes called "**infrastructure**." You know, canals, roads, all the stuff a society needs to run smoothly. Or in the case of our school, fixing our bathrooms or buying some new computers. Let's face it, those things are more important than building a pool no one really needs.

Heather: Everyone loves pools, and I'm sure that those Egyptians gazing up at their **monumental** gold-encrusted pyramids with the golden high noon desert sun burning in their dark almond eyes felt that twenty years of toiling was completely **justified**.

Cyrus: Um, Cleopatra? Have you been spending way too much time watching the History Channel?

Heather: Is it really that obvious?

In this week's social studies lesson, you will learn about the pyramids and temples of ancient Egypt. Thousands of peasants and craftsmen worked for years to build just one pyramid. Then workers filled it with gold, beautiful furniture, and jewelry. The building of the pyramids and temples used much of the **surplus** wealth the Egyptians produced, for more than what it took to feed and clothe all of the people.

As you learn about these **monumental** structures, think about these questions:

- How was Egypt's **surplus** wealth created?
- Why did Egypt use so much of this **surplus** to build the pyramids and other **architecture**?
- Was this use of that wealth **justified**? Were they wise or wasteful with their **surplus**?

© 2015 SERP — SoGen Unit 6.2 — 2

Reader's Theater

Ms. Jackson: No, Shania. Benjamin Franklin wrote those words 250 years ago. He was talking about something very different, but today some people quote him in debates about whether we should give up our privacy so we can be safer. I was thinking of it because I just came from a meeting with the principal and the other teachers. The principal **perceives** a need to install video cameras to **monitor** the bathrooms, hallways, and the playground to keep our school community safer. I'm trying to decide what I think about this idea, and I wanted to find out how you all feel about it.

Darnell: Well, I think having cameras around is a great idea. You know, we've had a problem with bullies here in school. We're okay in our classrooms but not in places where the teacher's not watching. Video cameras could make us feel more **secure** everywhere in the school.

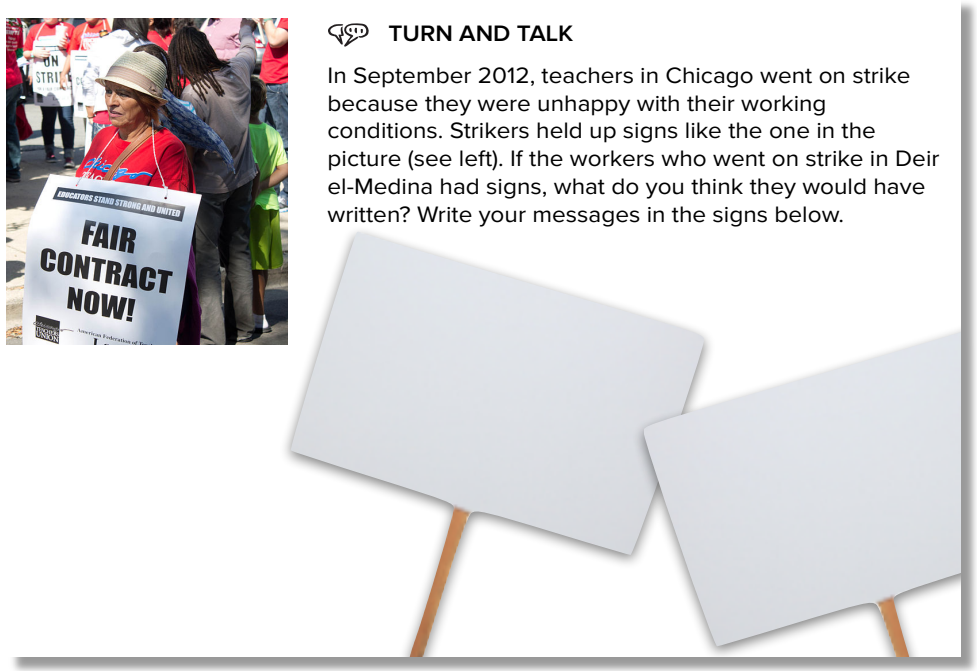
Shania: I don't think it's worth it, Darnell. When I'm with my friends in the hall, or outside the school, or combing my hair in the bathroom, I don't want someone watching me. I can't stand the idea that I'd have no privacy anywhere in this school.

Darnell: But school is really a public place. That's why they call it public school! It's not like being in your room at home.

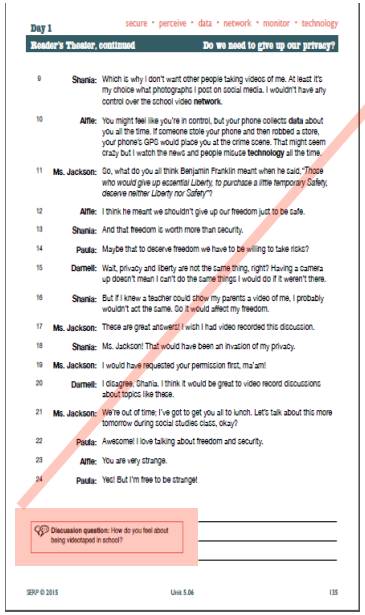
Paula: If I were doing anything wrong, or even thinking about doing something wrong, I wouldn't want any video cameras in school. But as long as I'm not doing anything wrong, the cameras wouldn't bother me.

Theory of change

- Promoting student talk, especially peer to peer talk (Applebee, Langer, Nystrand, & Gamoran, 2003)



- WG units contain several discussion prompts that encourage students share their ideas and opinions



Day 1 — secure • perceive • data • network • monitor • technology

Reader's Theater, continued — **Do we need to give up our privacy?**

9 **Shania:** Which is why I don't want other people taking videos of me. At least it's my choice what photographs I post on social media. I wouldn't have any control over the school video **network**.

10 **Alfie:** You might feel like you're in control, but your phone collects **data** about you all the time. If someone stole your phone and then robbed a store, your phone's GPS would place you at the crime scene. That might seem crazy but I watch the news and people misuse **technology** all the time.

11 **Ms. Jackson:** So, what do you all think Benjamin Franklin meant when he said, "*Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety*"?

12 **Alfie:** I think he meant we shouldn't give up our freedom just to be safe.

13 **Shania:** And that freedom is worth more than security.

14 **Paula:** Maybe that to deserve freedom we have to be willing to take risks?

15 **Darnell:** Wait, privacy and liberty are not the same thing, right? Having a camera up doesn't mean I can't do the same things I would do if it weren't there.

16 **Shania:** But if I knew a teacher could show my parents a video of me, I probably wouldn't act the same. So it would affect my freedom.

17 **Ms. Jackson:** These are great answers! I wish I had video recorded this discussion.

18 **Shania:** Ms. Jackson! That would have been an invasion of my privacy.

19 **Ms. Jackson:** I would have requested your permission first, ma'am!

20 **Darnell:** I disagree, Shania. I think it would be great to video record discussions about topics like these.

21 **Ms. Jackson:** We're out of time! I've got to get you all to lunch. Let's talk about this more tomorrow during social studies class, okay?

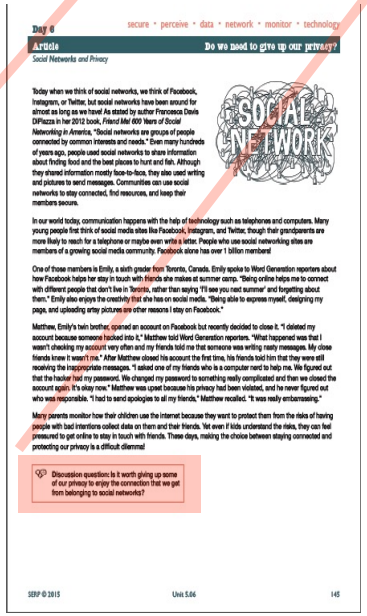
22 **Paula:** Awesome! I love talking about freedom and security.

23 **Alfie:** You are very strange.

24 **Paula:** Yes! But I'm free to be strange!

Discussion question: How do you feel about being videotaped in school?

SERP © 2015 — Unit 5.06 — 135



Day 6 — secure • perceive • data • network • monitor • technology

Article — **Do we need to give up our privacy?**

Social Networks and Privacy

Today when we think of social networks, we think of Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, but social networks have been around for almost as long as we have! As stated by author Francesca Davis DiPiazza in her 2012 book, *Friend Me! 600 Years of Social Networking in America*, "Social networks are groups of people connected by common interests and needs." Even many hundreds of years ago, people used social networks to share information about finding food and the best places to hunt and fish. Although they shared information mostly face-to-face, they also used writing and pictures to send messages. Communities can use social networks to stay connected, find resources, and keep their members secure.

In our world today, communication happens with the help of technology such as telephones and computers. Many young people first think of social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, though their grandparents are more likely to reach for a telephone or maybe even write a letter. People who use social networking sites are members of a growing social media community. Facebook alone has over 1 billion members!

One of those members is Emily, a sixth grader from Toronto, Canada. Emily spoke to Word Generation reporters about how Facebook helps her stay in touch with friends she makes at summer camp. "Being online helps me to connect with different people that don't live in Toronto, rather than saying 'I'll see you next summer' and forgetting about them." Emily also enjoys the creativity that she has on social media. "Being able to express myself, designing my page, and uploading artsy pictures are other reasons I stay on Facebook."

Matthew, Emily's twin brother, opened an account on Facebook but recently decided to close it. "I deleted my account because someone hacked into it," Matthew told Word Generation reporters. "What happened was that I wasn't checking my account very often and my friends told me that someone was writing nasty messages. My close friends knew it wasn't me." After Matthew closed his account the first time, his friends told him that they were still receiving the inappropriate messages. "I asked one of my friends who is a computer nerd to help me. We figured out that the hacker had my password. We changed my password to something really complicated and then we closed the account again. It's okay now." Matthew was upset because his privacy had been violated, and he never figured out who was responsible. "I had to send apologies to all my friends," Matthew recalled. "It was really embarrassing."

Many parents monitor how their children use the Internet because they want to protect them from the risks of having people with bad intentions collect data on them and their friends. Yet even if kids understand the risks, they can feel pressured to get online to stay in touch with friends. These days, making the choice between staying connected and protecting our privacy is a difficult dilemma!

Discussion question: Is it worth giving up some of our privacy to enjoy the connection that we get from belonging to social networks?

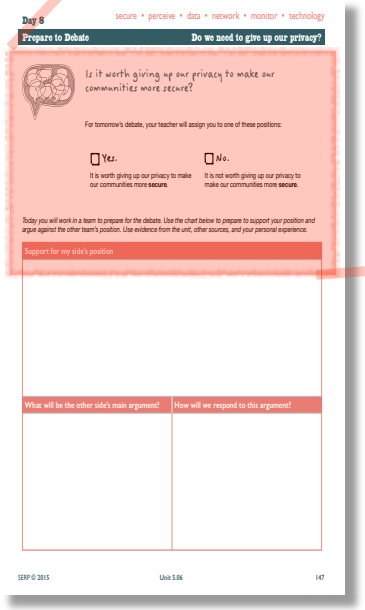
SERP © 2015 — Unit 5.06 — 145

Discussion question: How do you feel about being videotaped in school?

Discussion question: Is it worth giving up some of our privacy to enjoy the connection that we get from belonging to social **networks**?

Discussion question: Think about video cameras that exist in your community. Do you think they are helpful or harmful?

- In each WG unit, students work together in teams to prepare for a debate


Day 8

secure • perceive • data • network • monitor • technology

Prepare to Debate — **Do we need to give up our privacy?**

Is it worth giving up our privacy to make our communities more secure?

For tomorrow's debate, your teacher will assign you to one of these positions:

☐ Yes.
It is worth giving up our privacy to make our communities more **secure**.

☐ No.
It is not worth giving up our privacy to make our communities more **secure**.

Today you will work in a team to prepare for the debate. Use the chart below to prepare to support your position and argue against the other team's position. Use evidence from the unit, other sources, and your personal experience.

Support for my side's position

What will be the other side's main argument?	How will we respond to this argument?

SERP © 2015 Unit 5.06 147

Session 2

justify • monumental • surplus • architecture • infrastructure • hier

Building Background Knowledge

Striking Workers: Deir el-Medina (Set Maat)

The picture below shows the recently excavated remains of the ancient village Set Maat (now called Deir el-Medina), home to the laborers and artisans working on the nearby tombs. We know a lot about how the inhabitants of Set Maat lived from papyrus documents and inscribed pottery shards found in the ruins – these include receipts, prescriptions, magic spells, and even love songs! About 70 workers and their families lived in the village, in 3–5 room mud brick homes. Though these houses are simpler than Egypt's temples, tombs, and other **monumental** forms of **architecture**, the people who lived there were not peasants. They were skilled artisans – potters, carpenters, coppersmiths, sculptors, jewelers, and architects.

These workers helped design the tombs, carved sculptures, and made furniture and other beautiful objects to place in the tombs. Many were able to read and write. They were somewhere in the middle of Egypt's social **hierarchy**, well below the pharaoh and his officials, priests, and scribes, but much better off than the peasants.

The workers of Set Maat, like everyone else, suffered during leaner times. Sometime around 1160 BCE, grain reserves ran low. There were many building projects going on in Thebes and perhaps not enough grain rations for all the workers.

Also, sometimes corrupt officials stole grain from the reserves to resell it. In any case, grain payments to the workers at Set Maat suddenly stopped. To protest this unjust decision, the workers went on strike and refused to work until they were paid.

This event may well be the first recorded strike in history.

The workers' village at Deir el-Medina.

TURN AND TALK

In September 2012, teachers in Chicago went on strike because they were unhappy with their working conditions. Strikers held up signs like the one in the picture (see left). If the workers who went on strike in Deir el-Medina had signs, what do you think they would have written? Write your messages in the signs below.

FAIR CONTRACT NOW!

© 2015 SERP SoGen Unit 6.2 8

Prepare to Debate — **Do we need to give up our privacy?**

Is it worth giving up our privacy to make our communities more secure?

For tomorrow's debate, your teacher will assign you to one of these positions:

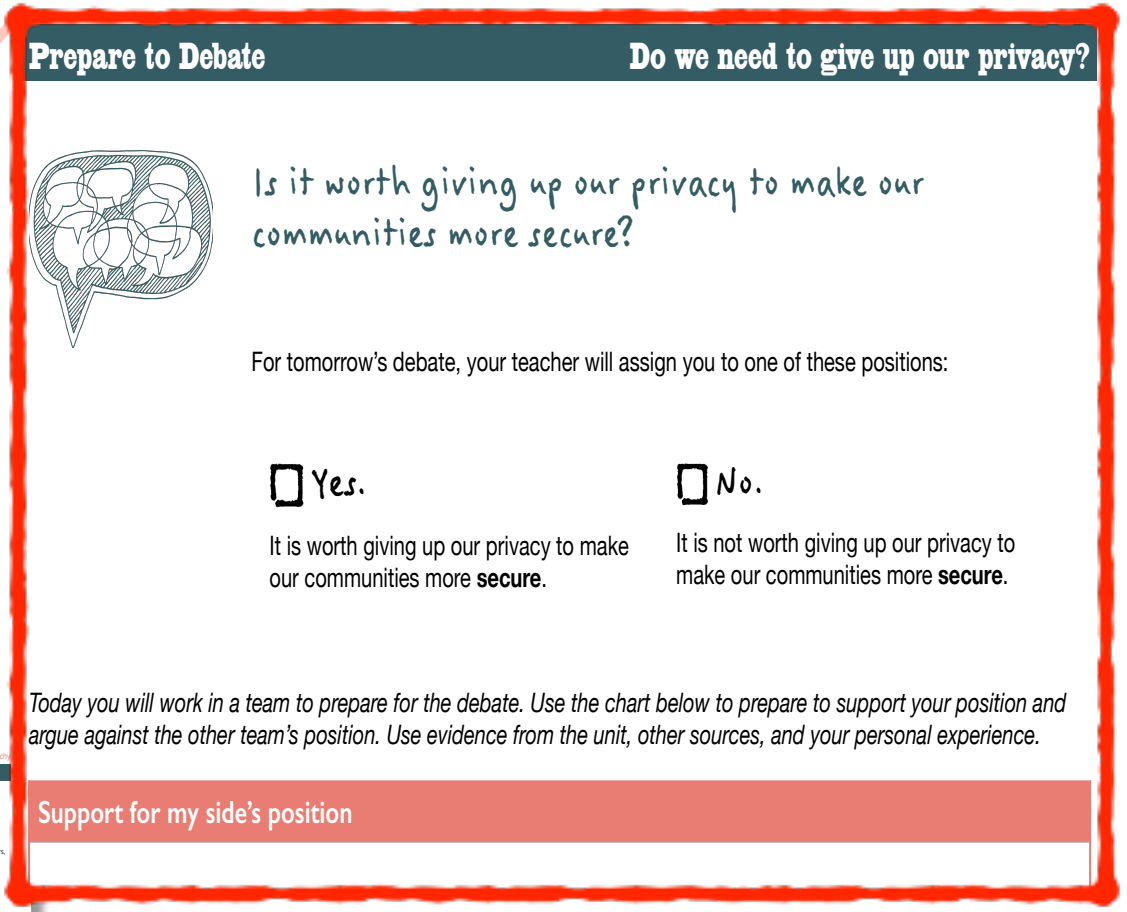
☐ Yes.
It is worth giving up our privacy to make our communities more **secure**.

☐ No.
It is not worth giving up our privacy to make our communities more **secure**.

Today you will work in a team to prepare for the debate. Use the chart below to prepare to support your position and argue against the other team's position. Use evidence from the unit, other sources, and your personal experience.

Support for my side's position

- Students are actively engaged in instructional dialogues with each other
- Preparing for the WG debates builds depth of knowledge through cumulative, contingent exchanges



Prepare to Debate — **Do we need to give up our privacy?**

Is it worth giving up our privacy to make our communities more secure?

For tomorrow's debate, your teacher will assign you to one of these positions:

☐ Yes.

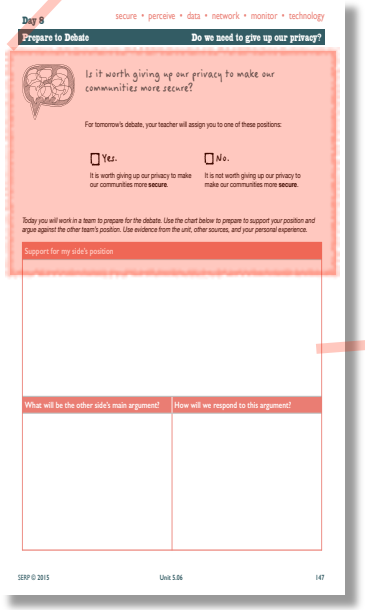
It is worth giving up our privacy to make our communities more **secure**.

☐ No.

It is not worth giving up our privacy to make our communities more **secure**.

Today you will work in a team to prepare for the debate. Use the chart below to prepare to support your position and argue against the other team's position. Use evidence from the unit, other sources, and your personal experience.

Support for my side's position



Day 8 — secure • perceive • data • network • monitor • technology

Prepare to Debate — Do we need to give up our privacy?

Is it worth giving up our privacy to make our communities more secure?

For tomorrow's debate, your teacher will assign you to one of these positions:

☐ Yes. It is worth giving up our privacy to make our communities more **secure**.

☐ No. It is not worth giving up our privacy to make our communities more **secure**.

Today you will work in a team to prepare for the debate. Use the chart below to prepare to support your position and argue against the other team's position. Use evidence from the unit, other sources, and your personal experience.

Support for my side's position

What will be the other side's main argument?	How will we respond to this argument?

SERP © 2015 — Unit 5.06 — 147

Session 2 — justify • monumental • surplus • architecture • infrastructure • hierarchy

Building Background Knowledge

Striking Workers: Deir el-Medina (Set Maat)

The picture below shows the recently excavated remains of the ancient village Set Maat (now called Deir el-Medina), home to the laborers and artisans working on the nearby tombs. We know a lot about how the inhabitants of Set Maat lived from papyrus documents and inscribed pottery shards found in the ruins – these include receipts, prescriptions, magic spells, and even love songs! About 70 workers and their families lived in the village, in 3–5 room mud brick homes. Though these houses are simpler than Egypt's temples, tombs, and other **monumental** forms of **architecture**, the people who lived there were not peasants. They were skilled artisans – potters, carpenters, coppersmiths, sculptors, jewelers, and architects.

These workers helped design the tombs, carved sculptures, and made furniture and other beautiful objects to place in the tombs. Many were able to read and write. They were somewhere in the middle of Egypt's social **hierarchy**, well below the pharaoh and his officials, priests, and scribes, but much better off than the peasants.

The workers of Set Maat, like everyone else, suffered during leaner times. Sometime around 1160 BCE, grain reserves ran low. There were many building projects going on in Thebes and perhaps not enough grain rations for all the workers.

Also, sometimes corrupt officials stole grain from the reserves to resell it. In any case, grain payments to the workers at Set Maat suddenly stopped. To protest this unjust decision, the workers went on strike and refused to work until they were paid.

This event may well be the first recorded strike in history.

The workers' village at Deir el-Medina.

TURN AND TALK

In September 2012, teachers in Chicago went on strike because they were unhappy with their working conditions. Strikers held up signs like the one in the picture (see left). If the workers who went on strike in Deir el-Medina had signs, what do you think they would have written? Write your messages in the signs below.

© 2015 SERP — SoGen Unit 6.2 — 8

Theory of change

- Defending stances with text-based evidence

Shania thinks that:

- ☐ Companies are collecting **data** from our cell phones.
- ☐ Video cameras are alright as long as the school doesn't share the **data** with outsiders.
- ☐ It's not worth feeling more **secure** with video cameras if it means giving up privacy.

Evidence: _____

_____

_____

_____

Theory of change

- Developing personal stances on a text

UNIT 2.01

SHOULD A STANDARDIZED TEST BE A REQUIREMENT FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION?

standardized | assess | criteria | correspond | formulate

TAKE A STAND

Support your position with clear reasons and specific examples. Try to use relevant words from the Word Generation list in your response.

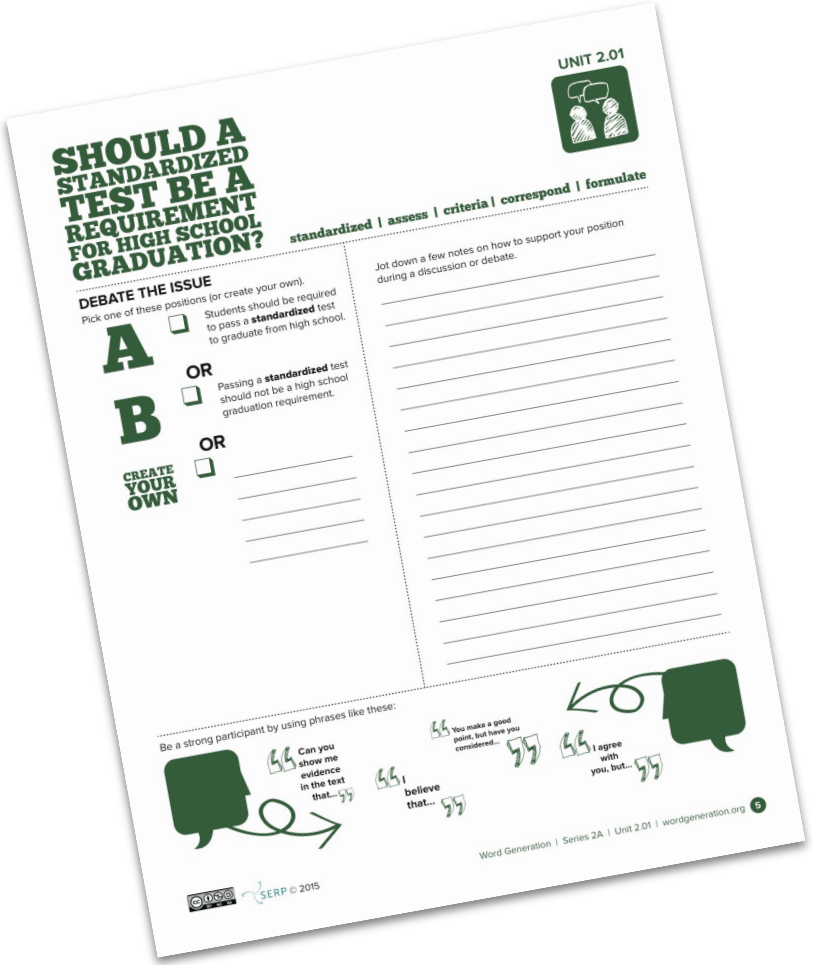
standardized | assess | criteria | correspond | formulate

Word Generation | Series 2A | Unit 2.01 | wordgeneration.org 6

SERP © 2015

Theory of change

- Learning discourse practices for discussion and debate



UNIT 2.01

SHOULD A STANDARDIZED TEST BE A REQUIREMENT FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION?

standardized | assess | criteria | correspond | formulate

DEBATE THE ISSUE

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

A ❑ Students should be required to pass a **standardized** test to graduate from high school.

OR

B ❑ Passing a **standardized** test should not be a high school graduation requirement.

OR

CREATE YOUR OWN ❑ _____

Jot down a few notes on how to support your position during a discussion or debate.

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these:

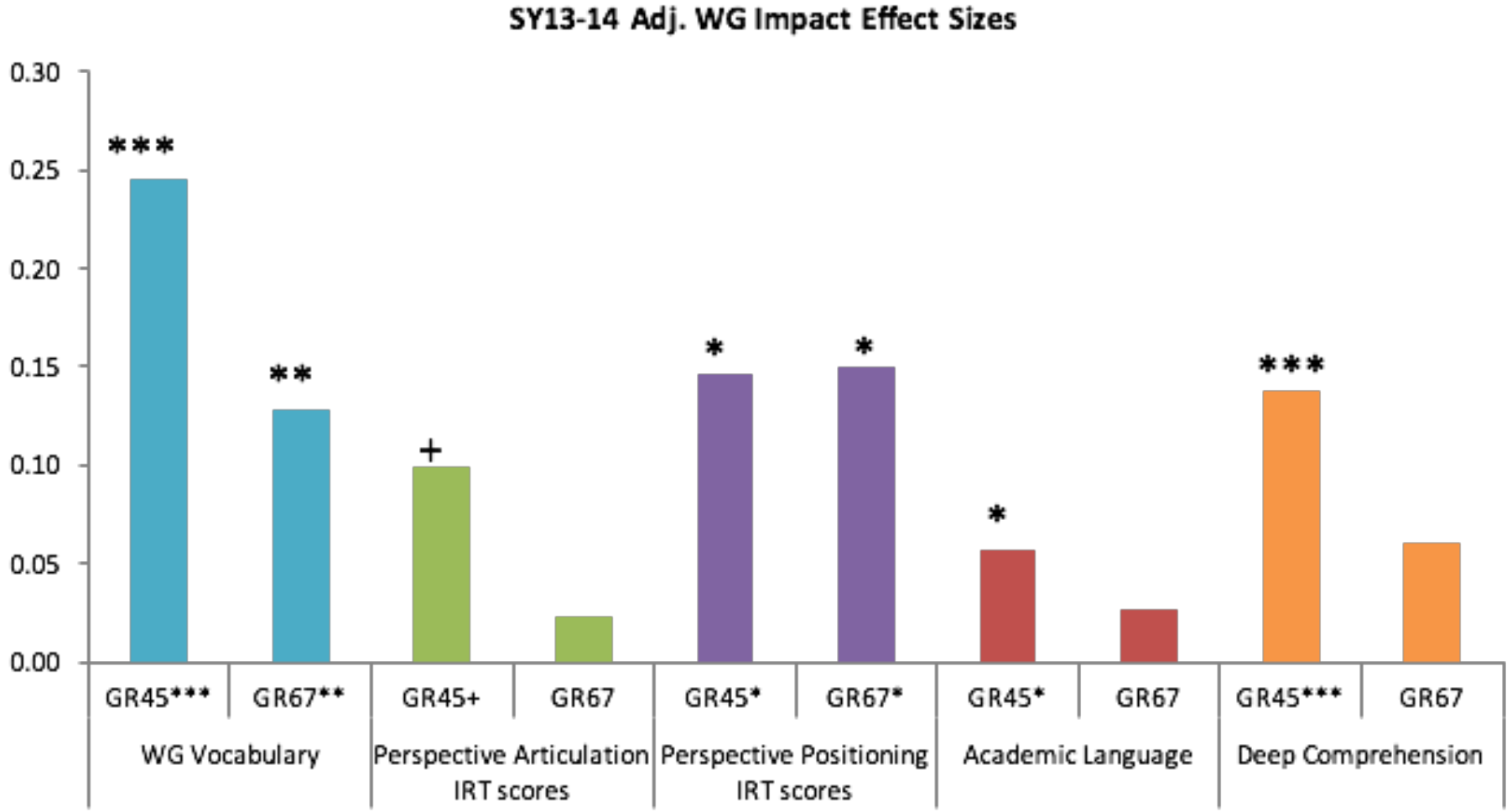
"Can you show me evidence in the text that..."

"I believe that..."

"You make a good point, but have you considered..."

"I agree with you, but..."

SERP © 2015



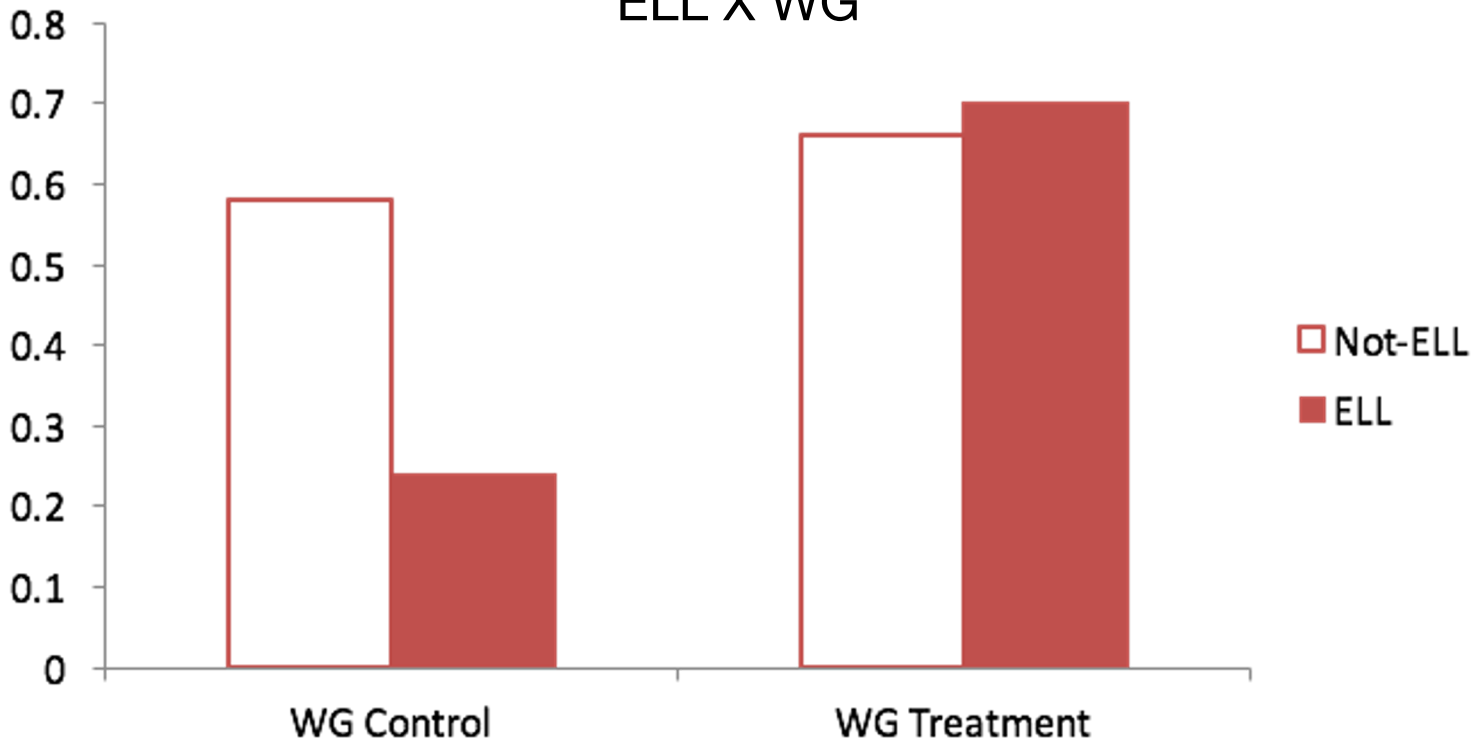
SERP

serpinstitute.org

Year 2 WG Impact Variation by Implementation Level: **Grades 4 and 5**

	WG Vocabulary		Perspective Articulation		Perspective Positioning		Academic Language		Deep Comprehension	
	b	*ES*	*b*	*ES*	*b*	*ES*	*b*	*ES*	*b*	*ES*
main impact	4.88***	0.25	0.09+	0.10	0.11*	0.15	0.06*	0.06	8.11***	0.14
WB Tertile										
Top Tertile	9.81***	0.49	0.15	0.17	0.23**	0.31	-.15	-0.14	12.44**	0.21
Second Tertile	7.68***	0.39	0.10	0.11	0.13	0.17	-.09	-0.08	9.13+	0.16
Third Tertile	1.76	0.09	0.12	0.14	0.04	0.05	-.20	-0.19	7.59	0.13

Academic Language
Grades 4 & 5 - Year 2
ELL X WG



Take home messages

- Improving literacy in 10-15 year olds requires
  - Engaging questions that provoke interest
  - Opportunities for authentic discussion, as well as writing and reading
  - Robust curricular support
  - Extended implementation
  - Some basic level of fidelity
- Discussion in classrooms is very rare, yet very powerful as a stimulus to using new and more sophisticated language forms

Post-presentation discussion

- Another tool to support discussion in classrooms

- https://www.academically-productive-talk.org/
- https://www.academically-productive-talk.org/archive

- Guiding questions: what techniques does the teacher use
  - To ensure students understand the task?
  - To support clear expression of their meaning?
  - To ensure universal engagement?

- Good examples
  - Decompose Numbers: first five min
  - Phonics, language arts, min 7:20 till boredom sets in