**Understanding and Resolving School Violence**

**Subject area/course**: English/Language Arts, Composition 1

**Grade level/band**: 11–12

**INSTRUCTOR PROCEDURES**

1. **Task overview**:

Students write an argumentative paper about school violence in the United States, using evidence from resources studied and discussed in class, as well as their own research findings. Students identify a specific problem related to school violence and then propose a solution to help decrease the chances of another school shooting. Their audience is a professional one that can act on or implement the student’s proposal (e.g., high school administrators, high school teachers).

1. **Prior knowledge required:**

Students should be able to:

* Articulate a main claim.
* Understand the difference between primary and secondary sources.
* Conduct independent research.
* Analyze and synthesize a variety of assigned readings.
* Use evidence from primary and secondary sources to support their claim.
* Use MLA style, both in-text and in a Works Cited, or another format of your choice.
* Control tone and diction, as appropriate for a professional audience.
* Write an argumentative essay.
* Revise an argumentative essay based on feedback.

1. **Common Core State Standards aligned to this task:**

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/11-12/1/) Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.3](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/11-12/3/) Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.4](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RI/11-12/4/) Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/1/) Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.4](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/4/) Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.5](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/5/) Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/7/) Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.8](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/8/) Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

[CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.9](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/11-12/9/) Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

1. **Time requirements:**

Plan about 3 weeks for this assignment. During Weeks 1 and 2, students can read the assigned documents, both in class and outside class. Students will also discuss the readings in class. Also, possibly show and discuss *Bowling for Columbine* in class. Students will need to conduct independent research once they have identified their topic.

In week 3 of this unit, students will write their researched argument outside class, and then bring their rough draft to class for peer review. Students will then revise their rough draft based on peer feedback, and then submit it to the instructor.

1. **Instructor materials to use during administration**:

You may need to provide copies of the first article by Staples (“Violence in Schools: Rage Against a Broken World”) if students don’t have access to the academic journal. If the text is unavailable, the teacher may choose to select a similar text to use in its place.

**Required Readings**

* J. Scott Staples’ “Violence in Schools: Rage Against a Broken World.” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 567, School Violence (Jan., 2000), pp. 30-41.
* James Garbarino’s “The Epidemic of Youth Violence,” chapter 1 in his 1999 book *Lost Boys: Why Our Sons Turn Violent and How We Can Save Them.* Available at:

<http://cecp.air.org/interact/authoronline/99nov/chapter_1.htm>

**Additional Readings**

* Tim Wise’s “Race, Class, Violence, and Denial: Mass Murder and the Pathologies of Privilege.” Available on Wise’s website at:

<http://www.timwise.org/2012/12/race-class-violence-and-denial-mass-murder-and-the-pathologies-of-privilege/>

* Gloria Steinem’s “Supremacy Crimes.” *Peacework Magazine,* June 2001. Available online at: <http://www.cusd80.com/cms/lib6/AZ01001175/Centricity/Domain/2120/Supremacy%20Crimes%20Gloria%20Steinem.pdf>
* Journal excerpts that you select from Columbine High School shooter, Eric Harris’s journal available at: <http://www.schoolshooters.info/eric-harris-journal.pdf>

**NOTE**: Harris’ journal contains very strong and graphic language and may not be appropriate for use in all classrooms.

1. **Instructor procedures during administration:**

* Introduce the topic by mentioning the recurring pattern of school shootings in the United States, an “epidemic” of violent, deadly behaviors.
* Expect students to work independently on this task, reading and writing at home, while also discussing the assigned readings in class.
* Consider this possible order for assigning and discussing the materials: Garbarino, Staples, Steinem, and Wise.
* Consider screening and discussing *Bowling for Columbine* during class, and/or any other relevant materials. Alternatively, students may be assigned the required readings and may choose to complete any other recommended readings or viewings outside of class time as well, as part of independent research.
* Discuss how to create a complex, arguable claim and how to use primary and secondary sources to support that claim.
* Discuss the challenges of writing to a professional audience.
* Conduct peer review in class by having students bring a rough draft of their paper to class. Students can read one another’s drafts, and then provide feedback to one another for revision. The instructor can read the rough drafts and provide feedback as well.

1. **Student support:**

The following suggestions are examples of scaffolding that can be used to meet the diverse student needs within the classroom.

* Provide class time for research on students’ topics.
* Provide definitions of new vocabulary words ahead of time.
* For the final product, all learners will benefit from peer assistance while brainstorming their topics, as well as a peer- or teacher-edit of their papers before final submission.
* Some students will have good research skills, but some will need guidance in the determination of appropriate sources and where to look for them. It is important to spend class time in review of what constitutes an appropriate source in advance of students’ independent work time

1. **Extensions or variations:**

* Students could present the results of their research to the class via an oral or multi-media presentation.
* A debate could be organized where students choose sides on the topic and defend their views.

1. **Scoring assessments and considerations:**

EPIC developed the *College and Career Ready (CCR) Task Bank Scoring Rubric* to accompany this task. If your school or department uses a standardized rubric that would fit the content and requirements of this task, you may choose to use your existing rubric. The following notes and suggestions are meant to clarify the intent of the rubric and include considerations for the assessment of student work.

* When assigning the task, provide students with the rubric that will be used to score their final product and discuss it as a class.
* Unlike some rubrics, the *CCR Task Bank Rubric* does not predetermine “point values” for the scoring criteria. The rubric thus allows for flexibility with different instructors’ scoring systems and individual determination of the “weight” of each criterion.
* Student work that scores at the *Accomplished* level is considered to be entry-level college work.
* The *Exceeds* category on the rubric provides an example of how a student can go above and beyond the *Accomplished* level. These examples are intended to be only ONE way a work product can exceed expectations, thus allowing room for your professional judgment.
* If needed, consider including task-specific criteria as an additional scoring category to the rubric or providing a checklist of requirements for the task.