**Subject area/course**: English/Language Arts; English Composition

**Grade level/band**: 11-12

**Task source**: Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC)

**Understanding and Resolving School Violence**

**TEACHER'S GUIDE**

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 (i.e., high school administrators, high school teachers).

1. **Aligned standards:**
2. **Primary Common Core State Standards**

[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. **Critical abilities**

Research: Conduct sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem, narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate, and demonstrate understanding of the subject under investigation. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, use advanced searches effectively, and assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience.

Analysis of Information:Integrate and synthesize multiple sources of information (e.g., texts, experiments, simulations) presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to address a question, make informed decisions, understand a process, phenomenon, or concept, and solve problems while evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

Communication in Many Forms:Use oral and written communication skills to learn, evaluate, and express ideas for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, and rewriting while considering the audience.

Interpersonal Interaction and Collaboration:Develop a range of interpersonal skills, including the ability to work with others, to participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations.

1. **Time/schedule 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. **Materials/resources:**

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. **Prior knowledge:**

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. **Connection to curriculum:**

None listed.

1. **Teacher instructions:**
* 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:**

Student work can be scored using the College and Career Ready (CCR) Task Bank rubric.