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

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

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

**Tracking Your Taxes**

**STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS**

1. **Task context**:

We all pay taxes. Some taxes are very visible in our culture, like the income taxes that the federal government collects in April of each year. Other taxes are less visible, like state taxes on certain products. Citizens of a country are responsible for helping determine what taxes they pay and how those taxes are spent. This assignment will help you understand how to find that information and make informed judgments.

For this task, you will become an educated citizen and then write an editorial to your school or local newspaper. Your goal is to help others understand a particular tax and argue for or against that tax. First, by researching government documents and other public sources of information, you will begin to discover the many types of taxes we pay. Before the wide variety of taxes overwhelms you, focus your research on one tax from the list. Continue your research in order to develop an argument, a way to persuade people to adopt a course of action. As is always the case, you should evaluate sources carefully for credibility, reliability, and lack of bias. You may discover sources which present an opinion, but which are not reliable. Your conclusions will probably differ from others, so be sure to explain why your position is reasonable and logical.

1. **Final product**:

After researching the different types of taxes that people pay, you will focus on one type of tax. Research government and other public documents to find information on how that tax is assessed, collected, and spent. Write a 3- to 4-page argumentative editorial that explains the information you found and evaluates the validity of how taxes are assessed and spent. What conclusions or implications can you draw?

Your paper should:

* Focus on one small part of a major topic.
* Be organized, coherent, and address the appropriate audience and purpose of your research.
* Support your position with evidence from your research.
* Consider alternative views.
* Employ standard English grammar and usage.
* Use in-text citations and a Works Cited page to cite your sources using MLA citation format or another style that your teacher selects.

**Additional Information**

1. **Knowledge and skills you will need to demonstrate on this task:**
* Research skills: Locating, evaluating, and citing primary and secondary sources
* Analysis skills: Reading through sources to identify important information
* Synthesis skills: Using information from a variety of sources to support an argument
* Writing skills: Using evidence to construct an argumentative essay
* Oral/Collaborative skills: Discussing your findings and position in a small group and conducting peer reviews
1. **Materials needed:**

You will need:

* Access to the Internet to conduct research
* Depending on the governmental structure of the area where your school is located, you may need access to the public library and/or municipal offices to research material that may not be available on the Internet (for example, local newspaper accounts)
* If you need to, consult a reference librarian for help in locating resources
1. **Time requirements:**

You will have approximately 3 weeks to complete this task:

* Week 1: Class brainstorming, forming groups, group choose topics, teacher checks topics, begin researching
* Week 2: Continue researching, begin outlining and drafting, meet in groups to share information and ideas
* Week 3: Draft due at the beginning of the week; peer feedback
* Beginning Week 4: Papers due
1. **Scoring:**

Your work will be scored using the College and Career Ready (CCR) Task Bank Rubric. You should make sure you are familiar with the language that describes the expectations for proficient performance.