



Smart School Councils

DEBATE PACK

Are you passionate about sharpening your critical thinking and speaking skills?

CAN YOUNG PEOPLE MAKE GOOD POLITICAL LEADERS?



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How to Use this Debate Pack

Whether you have just a few minutes or a full lesson, this Debate Pack has got you covered. Check out the Certificates at the end too.

How to find the debate video and send to teachers

1. Log in to the [Smart School Councils platform](#) using your school details.
2. Click on the blue Class Meeting Tool button in the dashboard.
3. Click on 'Next Meeting' at the top of the page.
4. To get started, click on 'click here' to browse existing questions and options.
5. If the debate topic is part of this week's question, it will appear there. Otherwise, click 'Search All' and type in the debate topic you're looking for.

Got five minutes?

Play the debate video straight through and dive right into the debate. No need to pause at the prompts. It's a quick, engaging way to get your students thinking.

Got 10/15 minutes?

Pause at the prompts in the video to explore additional ideas your class might have. Use the additional points or Power Facts if you'd like.

Want to extend to 30 minutes or a full lesson?

Check out the lesson plan and writing tasks below. There is also a full Fact Sheet with amazing further reading if your students want to go deeper on the topic.

What do the icons in the pack mean?



This is what the presenter says on the video



This is a Power Fact to explain or prompt debate that's not in the video



This is an additional debate point that's not in the video

Introduction and Brain Gym Question

Introduction



Welcome to Big Debate Club!

My name is Becky and today we are debating the question...

Can young people make good political leaders?

At Smart School Councils, we're all about helping you make your school into a democracy, where everyone is heard and you can make decisions together, and from what I see, you're leading some great discussions and making informed decisions. Maybe you will be great political leaders next.

History has seen younger leaders make big changes, from Jacinda Ardern becoming Prime Minister of New Zealand at 37 in 2017, to William Pitt the Younger becoming British Prime Minister at 24 in 1783. Young leaders can bring fresh ideas, energy, and a better understanding of modern issues. But are age and experience crucial when making decisions for everyone? You decide.

Brain Gym Question

Before we get started with the debate, I have a question for you...

According to a 2023 report, roughly what percentage of parliamentarians worldwide are under the age of 30?

- a) 22%
- b) 14%
- c) 6%
- d) 2%

Surveys find that 61% of young people cite distrust in political leaders and institutions, and 42% say there are limited opportunities for youth participation - this could be helped if there was more youth representation in political leadership. (Source: Geopoll, [LINK](#))



FOR: Young people can make good political leaders


We're going to share reasons for both sides of the debate, then it's up to you to think of the rest!

Young people can bring more energy and adaptability

You might be thinking that young people bring more energy and adaptability. A 2015 study in *Leadership Quarterly* found that younger managers in organisational settings demonstrated higher adaptability and faster decision-making in uncertain environments - all skills also valuable in politics.

We need more representation for young people across the world

You could say that we need more representation for young people across the world. A 2020 United Nations report highlights that over 40% of the world's population is under 25. Having younger leaders ensures political decisions better reflect the needs, values, and priorities of these age groups.

Can you think of another reason why you might argue that young people can make good political leaders? 

Parliamentary and Cabinet representation needs to improve

Across OECD countries, people aged 20–39 make up 34% of the voting-age population but only 22% of Members of Parliament, and only 3% of cabinet ministers are aged 35 or under, revealing a gap between youth population and leadership positions which needs to be filled in order to full represent the high youth population across the world. (Source: OECD, [LINK](#))

The majority of young people want to be involved in politics

Among young people aged 14–18, 71% said they would vote if eligible, and 78% of those felt informed about politics, suggesting increased political knowledge makes youth more likely to participate meaningfully and thereby have the knowledge base to be successful in leadership roles despite their age. (Source: *Young Citizens*, [LINK](#))



AGAINST: Young people cannot make good political leaders

Now let's change positions and consider why you might argue that young people cannot make good political leaders.


You can only decision the right decision to make after experience



You might think that we can only understand the right political decisions to make after years of debates. Thomas Piketty says that political expertise often develops over decades of being in political and economic debates - something age naturally provides.

Younger leaders might be more likely to fall to peer pressure

Or you could also say younger leaders might be more likely to fall to peer pressure. 2017 studies on leadership show that younger leaders, having made fewer important decisions, may be more susceptible to be influenced by other senior politicians or powerful groups to follow what they think rather than what their own mind says.

Can you think of another reason why you might argue that young people cannot make good political leaders? 

Lack of life experience and access could limit them



In many regions, limited access to finances, networks, resources, and mentorship prevents young people from running successful political campaigns or gaining influence which makes it harder for them to perform well in leadership roles. (Source: *Emmason Integration Services*, [LINK](#))

Most under 18s lack political literacy

Research from UK charities shows 70% of young people under 18 couldn't name their local MP, and 79% didn't know the issues their MP prioritises, indicating gaps in basic political awareness from those under 18. This could suggest if they do participate in politics it might start later than 18, limiting their years of political experience. (Source: *Save the Children*, [LINK](#))



FactSheet: Can young people make good political leaders?



Here's six key facts - three on each side - if you'd like to go a little deeper.

They can make good political leaders

Young people want to be involved in politics

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Parliamentary and Cabinet youth representation needs to improve

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Young people engage and participate showing they have a great understanding

In a global survey, 60% of young people said they were very interested in learning about politics and governance, and 81% said they voted in the last election if they were able. This shows strong political engagement intentions from young people and that they do have great political knowledge and participation despite their young age. (Source: *Geopoll*, [LINK](#))

They cannot make good political leaders

The majority of under 18s have a lack of political literacy

Research from UK charities shows 70% of young people under 18 couldn't name their local MP, and 79% didn't know the issues their MP prioritises, indicating gaps in basic political awareness from those under 18. This could suggest if they do participate in politics it might start later than 18, limiting their years of political experience. (Source: *Save the Children*, [LINK](#))

Limited life experience due to lack of access could limit success

In many regions, limited access to finances, networks, resources, and mentorship prevents young people from running successful political campaigns or gaining influence which makes it harder for them to perform well in leadership roles. (Source: *Emmason Integration Services*, [LINK](#))

A system that is skewed towards older elites could limit them

Studies show that political systems worldwide are dominated by older elites, and age bias can make youth leaders less likely to be viewed as competent, regardless of skill. This would hinder a young persons' effectiveness and opportunity as a political leader. (Source: *Sciencedirect*, [LINK](#))

Sentence Starters

POINT

LEMON & HERB: One reason why I (agree/disagree) with this debate is because...

MEDIUM: One point I have for this debate is...

HOT: You could say that...

EVIDENCE

LEMON & HERB: One way I can prove my point is through this example...

MEDIUM: I can show this works through the fact that...

HOT: I know this because...

EXPLANATION

LEMON & HERB: The evidence I have discussed above proves my point as...

MEDIUM: This example proves my point because...

HOT: Therefore, this proves my point as...

LINK

LEMON & HERB: All together, this answers the debate question asked by...

MEDIUM: This point answers the overall question because...

HOT: These ideas answer the debate as...





**Post your debate on
social media!**

SHARE YOUR VOICE

We shout out the best opinions each week

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DEBATER OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

For debating fairly, respectfully and persuasively. Well done!

Share a snap or video @SSCCTY on Twitter for a national shoutout and a prize!



Greg Sanderson

Founder, Smart School Councils

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CLASS MEETING LEADER OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

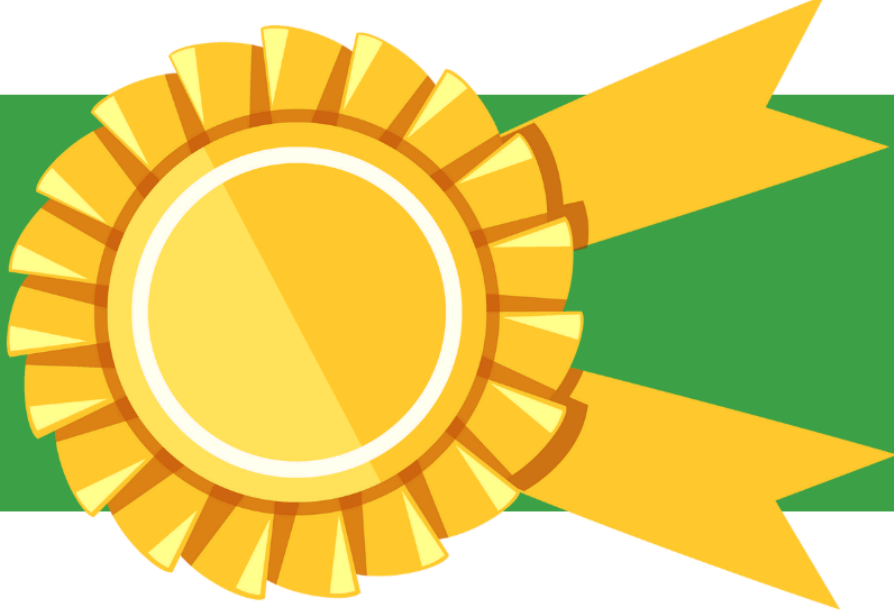
For showing skill and confidence in leading today's Class Meeting.

Share a snap or video @SSCCTY on Twitter for a national shoutout and a prize!



Greg Sanderson

Founder, Smart School Councils



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BEST IDEA OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

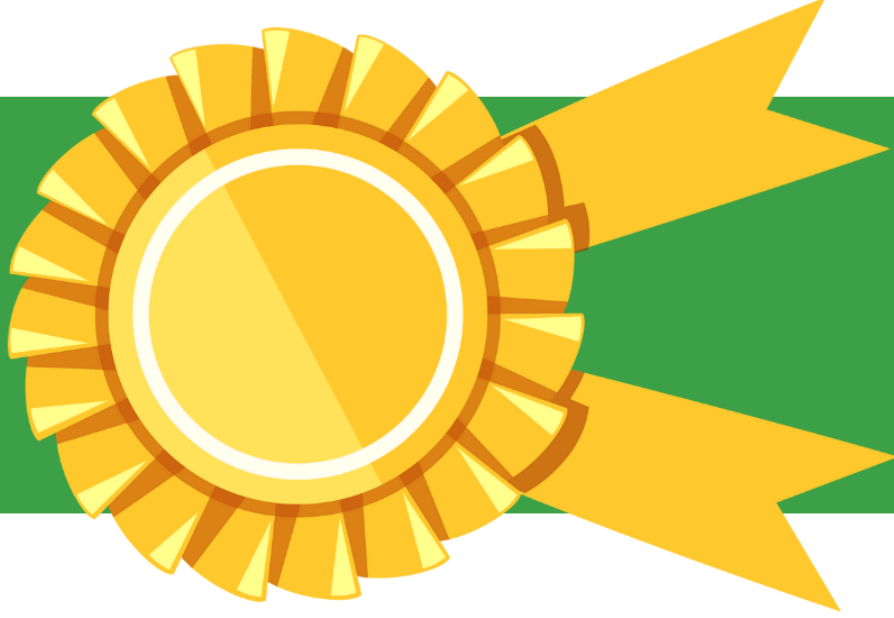
For speaking up with a great new idea on today's topic. Amazing.

Share a snap or video @SSCCTY on Twitter for a national shoutout and a prize!



Greg Sanderson

Founder, Smart School Councils



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