

Citizen Scholar Conference

Abstracts of papers from students who were invited to present

Early education is an important step in preparing a child for their future, but as technology advances it gets harder for today's children to relate to conventional teaching methods. This paper discusses how elementary school teachers can use augmented reality to bring what they are teaching to life and bridge the gap between modern technology and the subject being taught. Through the use of research studies, I will argue that augmented reality is the best option to enhance early education in the future as it provides many benefits in teaching the children using methods that can adapt to their own unique learning styles.

The initial actions taken to conserve grizzly bears in the late 1960's in Yellowstone National Park by closing open-pit garbage dumps was a disaster. Over the next few years the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem's population of grizzly bears suffered a big population decline. Over one-hundred and fifty bears died seeking alternate food sources after the closures of the dumps. I grew up in Saint Anthony, Idaho in the eastern part of the state. Saint Anthony is in very close proximity to the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE) and as a result I have spent a lot of time in the area covered by the GYE. The number of grizzly bears in the GYE has increased since they were listed on the Endangered Species List to a point that some management needs to take place. There has been an ever increasing number of human-grizzly bear interactions and as a result, problems including but not limited to; attacks on humans and livestock, increased stress on already struggling elk herds, and more "problem" bears requiring management actions. Something needs to change. I will explore one management option in particular, hunting, and its benefits in sustaining a healthy population of grizzly bears while reducing the amount of problems caused by grizzly bears.

Reading is required in all secondary education schools. However, books that are often chosen do not have an appeal to the students who read them. Students sometimes lack the motivation needed to read books of so much disinterest to them. I define a difference between two types of fiction: popular fiction, which is more recent literature often read as a fad, and accepted fiction, which is the commonly required reading and also referred to as classics. Through my analysis of three types of books—popular fiction, accepted fiction, and nonfiction—I consider which should be given precedence in middle schools and high schools. Each has its own benefits and disadvantages, but I consider whether there should be a change to what is taught in such English classes. I conclude that a balance should be established among the three types of books that may change how many English classrooms are organized.

Sin taxes are taxes that the government puts on goods that it sees as "immoral" or "sinful." They are very often taxes on products where no matter the changes in price, demand for that product will stay constant. In particular this paper looks at the sin tax applied to cigarettes. It reviews the healthcare cost burden associated with cigarettes that the U.S. carries and whether the cigarette tax can help alleviate that. There are many ethical questions that come along with the cigarette tax such as how it disproportionately affects the poor more than the rich and if the government should have the right to decide what is "sinful" behavior to be taxed. Finally the paper observes research on the consequences of the cigarette tax in the market and whether it is actually effective in reducing smoking habits in society.

Animal testing is a commonly used but hotly opposed practice in the scientific world. In this essay, we'll discuss the ethical and scientific arguments for and against the practice of animal testing. Is it ethical? Is it effective? Does it benefit more than it harms? We'll explore this by combining the research of many different scientists published in peer-reviewed scientific journals, the opinions of others including animal rights groups, and even my own personal experience working in a real laboratory that studied mice. After consideration of all these sources, it is clear that animal testing is still a vital piece of many scientific studies. However, we need to do everything we can to increase the validity and effectiveness of these tests while striving to protect the animals as well.

Disabilities have been around as long as humans. The scope of disability covers a large spectrum including mental, physical, emotional, and intellectual disabilities. Some disabilities are congenital, meaning you are born with them. Other disabilities are acquired, meaning they come later in life and are caused by various circumstances. There is a lack of knowledge and understanding within society regarding the issue of prejudice against people with disabilities, specifically within the education system. Those who work and learn within the education system should gain a deeper understanding of the effects of their prejudices against those who have disabilities. One solution to reach the general public is to offer classes within the community, which will address different types of disabilities and the proper way to include and accommodate people with disabilities. Within specific institutions, primarily K-12, teachers should be required to receive training and education on the effects of disabilities regardless of if they have a student with disabilities in their classroom. Teachers should incorporate the knowledge and understanding they gain in their lessons, specifically in health curriculums. It's important for all students to learn about people with disabilities. Focusing on school age children will have a ripple effect that will extend into future generations. Disabilities affect many people within our society, so it is our responsibility to educate all individuals that lie within the realm of education.

Kids form their opinions on the world through the things they read, the media they view, the teachers who educate them and the behavior they see modeled by other people. In a society that shames fat, we are unconsciously teaching kids at a young age that having more fat on their bodies makes them less worthy, less capable of making healthy choices and more likely to use unhealthy, extreme behaviors to manage their weight. As eating disorder and obesity rates have risen over the last century, many people hope to solve these problems with simple solution. However, treating these complex problems with simple solutions can make the problem worse. Kids are taught that eating disorders are bad and we should avoid those extreme behaviors. They are also educated on the harmful effects of obesity and told that they need to make healthy choices so they don't gain excess weight. The more we instill the idea that obesity is a sign of weakness, we are enforcing the anti-fat prejudice in our culture. These extreme messages can be detrimental for kid's health. Government organizations and schools have both been pushing towards ending the obesity epidemic without considering how they might be damaging children's relationship with food. Highly respected political leaders and teachers encourage kids to avoid gaining weight, but without realizing it, they are shaming kids who do have larger bodies which sets large children up for insecurities while enforcing prejudice against those with large bodies.
