WordGen Weekly is a supplementary curricular resource that offers a series of discussable dilemmas designed to promote students’ academic language, perspective-taking, and argumentation skills. WordGen Weekly creates the opportunity for students to become familiar with current issues and persistent dilemmas, while acquiring skills prioritized in the 21st century learning standards.

The program is unique in its cross-disciplinary design, giving teachers of ELA, science, social studies, and math the chance to collaborate on the shared goal of helping students use academic language to articulate their thinking. Units can be used school-wide in grades 6–8.

### How WordGen Weekly Works

**Introductory Guide for Middle School Teachers**

Daily instructional activities are designed to build the vocabulary of middle school students through repeated exposure to academic words in various contexts.

#### Key Features:

- Three “series” (years) of materials, with 24 one-week units per series
- Units can be used in any order
- Units focus on a social or civic dilemma
- Five connected 15–20 minute activities for ELA, math, science, and social studies
- Five academic “focus words” emphasized per week

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1. Introduce the topic of the week, providing students the opportunity to discuss their perspectives with their partners.

2. Read or have volunteers read the passage aloud, stopping to discuss the passage. Examples of questions for classroom discussion are noted in the Teacher Edition.

   **Teaching tip:**

   *Many WordGen Weekly topics are highly controversial. It is important to establish discussion norms to hold students accountable for respectful, equitable, and productive discussions. Resources on establishing norms are available on the WordGen Weekly website.*

3. Discuss the various positions presented in the passage. Encourage students to begin developing a claim, an arguable statement about the topic.

**Instructional Considerations:**

- Model fluent reading of the passage by having the teacher or a fluent reader read the passage while the class follows along.

- Model reading and thinking strategies in context. Encourage the use of highlighters or sticky notes to annotate the text.

- Explain to students that the lessons present information that can be used to argue both for and against particular claims. Also, each day’s lesson adds a bit more information, so it is important to participate in all the activities.
Day 1 (cont.): USE THE FOCUS WORDS

4. Introduce the unit focus words by displaying each word, reading each word aloud, and having students repeat each word.

   Teaching tip: Establish a routine to introduce and review the focus words.

5. Build students’ understanding of the focus words using the definitions, sample sentences, and Turn and Talk prompts.

   Teaching tip: Throughout the week, teachers can use this page as a reference. Resources for effective strategies for vocabulary instruction, including vocabulary cards, are available on the WordGen Weekly website.

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Instructional Considerations:

- Make word learning fun! Recognize students who use the focus words during and outside of class time.

- Encourage students to acknowledge the focus words throughout their daily discussions.

- Creatively display the current focus words on an active word wall. Retire the previously used words to a designated location in the room where students can reference all focus words throughout the year.

- Encourage experimentation with the words and use mistakes as teachable moments.
Day 2: DO THE MATH

Focus words embedded in the activity provide opportunities for students to read the words and establish a mathematical context.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF SCHOOL?
How do Americans view their public schools? Analyze the three graphs below. The information comes from a national survey of American parents taken by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

DO THE MATH
How well do local public schools prepare students for college?

Option 1: Which of the following is the best way to interpret the data shown in these three graphs?
A. Most American parents think that public schools do a good job of teaching job-related skills.
B. American parents are concerned that the next generation will not be good citizens.
C. Most American parents believe that public schools get students ready to go to college.
D. American parents are disappointed with today’s public schools.

Option 2: Based on the graphs, what is the probability that an American parent thinks public schools do a good or excellent job of preparing students for college AND that they think the next generation will not be good citizens?

Math lessons offer selected and open-ended response questions.

Math lessons are related to the weekly topic.

Real-world math problems are related to the weekly topic.

1. Review the focus words.

Teaching tip:
Ask students to think about and explain how the focus words can be used in a math classroom.

2. Read and solve the math problem(s) that relate to the weekly topic. Option 1 usually involves a simple operation presented in a selected response format. Option 2 is an open-ended response question and is typically more challenging for students.

Teaching tip:
Students may work in pairs or groups to encourage discussion about the math problem.

3. Facilitate a class discussion using the discussion question at the end of the lesson.

Discussion questions accompany each math lesson. This allows the teacher to connect the math activity to the topic, tap into students’ beliefs about the week’s topic, and provide an opportunity to explicitly use the focus words.

Instructional Considerations:
- If the math problems are out of reach for your students, discuss and solve Option 1 as a class or in groups. Problems can also be used to demonstrate the proper use of problem solving strategies.
- The lesson is designed to take 15–20 minutes; however, class discussions can prolong the lessons. Some teachers use timers to streamline instructional procedures and routines in WordGen Weekly classrooms.
- The discussion questions at the end of the lesson provide a format for connecting the math activity to the topic, explicitly using the focus words, and tapping into students’ beliefs.
- Encourage students to use the focus words in the discussion and use mistakes as teachable moments.
Day 3: THINK SCIENTIFICALLY

1. Review the focus words.

Teaching tip:
Ask students to think about and explain how the focus words can be used in a science classroom.

2. Read and discuss the Think Scientifically passage, allowing students to interpret the data and draw conclusions.

Teaching tip:
Students may work in pairs or groups to encourage discussion about the lesson.

3. Facilitate a class discussion using the discussion question at the end of the lesson.

Instructional Considerations:

- The lesson is designed to take 15–20 minutes; however, class discussions can prolong the lessons. Some teachers use timers to streamline instructional procedures and routines in WordGen Weekly classrooms.

- Encourage students to make connections between the weekly topic and the data in the science experiment.

- Encourage students to use the focus words in the discussion and use mistakes as teachable moments.
Instructional Considerations:

- Debates in WordGen Weekly are planned classroom activities in which particular claims are discussed, and then students plan together to present and defend their claim. The focus is not winning or losing the debate; the purpose is to develop students’ abilities to think through a set of claims or arguments in order to deepen their understanding and enhance their ability to learn.

- Many teachers create debate organizers or provide chart paper for students to write their arguments. This can serve as a pre-writing activity for the “Take a Stand” writing task.

- Discussion norms should establish expectations for respectful disagreement and establish practices that allow all students to participate. Post norms in the classroom as a reminder.

- During the debate, encourage students to share, clarify, and expand their thoughts using academically productive talk and to listen and respond to the ideas of others.
Day 5: TAKE A STAND

1. Review the displayed focus words.

2. Introduce the writing assignment.

   **Teaching tip:**
   *Students should use evidence to support their written argument. Possible sources of evidence are the launch passage, math activity, science activity, and debate.*

3. Students write an essay taking a stand on the issue.

**Instructional Considerations:**

- The writing assignments can change throughout the year based on the needs of your students. Teachers have used WordGen Weekly writing assignments as quick-writes, free-writes, information pieces, letters, and argumentative writing pieces. The main goal of the writing assignment is for students to make a claim and justify that claim with evidence and/or reasoning from the text using academic language.

- A rubric for argumentative writing can be found on the WordGen Weekly website.
More resources available online!

› Direct student access to materials:

Students can access individual units for free at serp.link (no registration necessary).

› Teacher access to Teacher Editions, vocabulary cards, and more:

Teachers can access student materials and teacher editions for free by registering at serpinstitute.org/wordgen-weekly.

☐ Focus word vocabulary cards
☐ Information about academic language and vocabulary instruction
☐ Vocabulary assessments
☐ Activities to develop discussion and debate in the classroom
☐ Rubrics for discussion, debate, and argumentative writing
☐ Professional learning opportunities
☐ Interviews with the developers of the program
☐ Videos of Word Generation classrooms
☐ Topic lists
☐ Focus word lists

› Registration for WordGen Weekly provides teachers access to all of SERP’s free educator resources.

WordGen Weekly is so much more than a vocabulary program!

▶ WordGen Weekly builds the reasoning and argumentation skills that are necessary for learning in all content areas.

▶ WordGen Weekly builds reading comprehension and content-area literacy by providing students with motivating text, opportunities for discussion and debate, and weekly writing.

▶ WordGen Weekly sets students on a path to college and career readiness by providing multiple perspectives on complex problems and requiring that students sift through evidence that supports or contradicts particular perspectives.