Action News

Can fourth graders argue effectively?

Who should decide what we eat?

PAIGE REIDER: Good day, student viewers! This is Paige Reider reporting! Today, we’re covering a story about a study that says that students in the fourth and fifth grade don’t understand how to discuss important ideas effectively. Instead, they tend to fight with each other about who is right and who is wrong! There also seems to be a problem with respect in these discussions. I’ve interviewed the author of that study, Prof. Kuhn, who told me that her study showed that younger kids have a hard time understanding how important it is to listen to the opinions of others. Instead, they’re more interested in being right!

We have a reporter in the field investigating this issue. Justin, I understand that you also spoke to an actual fourth grader about this issue?

JUSTIN THYME: That’s right, Paige! Earlier, I spoke with Sabrina, a fourth grader at Lincoln Elementary School, who gave her opinion about fourth graders and their ability to argue effectively. She said that some do and some don’t. She is happy that her teacher, Ms. Rodriguez, taught the class how to listen to each other and build on what the other person said.

PAIGE: Those sound like important skills, Justin, but do they really help?

JUSTIN: Well, actually, Sabrina described an argument they had yesterday in class about school lunches and who should decide what we eat and what’s nutritious. They were talking about the national campaign to eliminate junk food from school lunches. It got ugly for a while. Some kids weren’t very respectful and were rude to each other. But Ms. Rodriguez kept reminding them to listen and to build on what others said.

PAIGE: I guess the question is: Does Sabrina represent the majority of fourth graders, or is she the exception? She sounds pretty smart to me! Thank you, Justin. I hope we hear more from the students at Lincoln Elementary. We’re also going to stay close to the topic of the campaign to eliminate junk food from school lunches. Keep us informed, Justin!

This is Paige Reider, signing off!

Discussion question: Do you agree with Professor Kuhn’s observations about fourth graders’ inability to argue effectively? What evidence from your experience as a fourth grader supports your opinion?