2020 Speak Up Congressional Briefing Discussion Prompt and Guide (Grades 3-12)

Hello Educators,

Thank you for your interest in the 2020 Speak Up Congressional Briefing. As we know, in Spring 2020 education shifted drastically because of a global pandemic that could not have been predicted. This monumental event caused many schools across the United States to shift their instructional practices to include the widespread use of remote learning and with this shift came a multitude of challenges that still impact a variety of stakeholders. To best understand the challenges that are faced by our schools, it is vital to consider the role that technology played in learning environments prior to school closures, as well as various ways it has been implemented in a remote learning environment. We have developed this Discussion Guide to support your use of our Congressional Briefing video with your students. It is our hope that these resources provide an opportunity to continue conversations with your students about their outlooks on their education, the role of technology and promoting advocacy for practices that best suit their learning needs and styles.

This accompanying document provides resources and ideas to help supplement this year's Congressional Briefing on digital learning during the pandemic. Resources and ideas are broken down into three grade bands: 3rd-5th grade, 6th-8th grade and 9th-12th grade. You're welcome to use as many of the activity ideas and discussion questions as you would like to help support your student's understanding of the data presented during the briefing and to stimulate new class discussions.

For each grade band you can expect to find:

1. Resources and discussion questions to frame students' viewing of the congressional briefing
2. Discussion prompts and guiding questions for the briefing with time stamps (Note: you may choose to view the briefing in smaller chunks across a couple of days or view it in its entirety in one session)
3. Post-viewing activities to help students reflect, share, and promote student voice within and beyond their school communities.

We thank you again for your ongoing support with Speak Up and hope the congressional briefing is an insightful look into the shifting landscape of education for you and your students. Please email David Gomez at dgomez@tomorrow.org with any ideas that you feel can improve the discussion guide and your experience using the guide with your students.

Best,

The Project Tomorrow Team

Alignments and Standards

ELA Standards >> College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening (K-12)

- o **CCSS ELA-Literacy-CCRA.SL.1(5)** Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- o **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.6**

    Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

Grades 3-5:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on *grade 3 (grade 4, grade 5) topics and texts*, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Grades 6-8:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1.D

Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented.

Grades 9-12:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1
Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.D

Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

View additional individual grade level standards for speaking and listening here

3rd-5th Grade

Pre-Congressional Briefing Activities

1. Providing context and instruction on Congress:
    a. Watch the iCivics: Legislative Branch and/or The United States Congress videos to help provide students with more context about what Congress is and what the role of Congress is in the United States.
        i. After watching the video, you can also play the iCivics: Legislative Branch games to help students experience what it may be like to be a member of Congress. *Note: Games are only accessible after signing up for a free iCivics teacher account.*
    b. What is Congress? How are Laws Made?
        i. The provided articles can be used for class readings and discussions to help students learn more about Congress, the role of the House, House members, House leadership and more!

2. Review what the Speak Up Research Project is with students to provide context for research and surveys.

   The Speak Up Research Project, a national initiative of Project Tomorrow, is both a national research project and a free service to schools and districts everywhere. Since fall 2003, Speak Up has helped education leaders include the voices of their stakeholders in annual and long-term planning. More than 5 million participants have made Speak Up the largest collection of authentic, unfiltered stakeholder input on education, technology, schools of the future, science and math instruction, professional development and career exploration. National-level reports inform policymakers at all levels.

3. Have a brief class discussion about the changes to school in 2020.
    a. What changes have you and other students experienced with how you attend school?
    b. How has technology been used to help students learn? Has it been used differently than before?

c. What has worked well for you with online learning? What has been challenging?

During Congressional Briefing Discussion Guide

3rd- 5th	Part I: Reviewing the Data
	1. (25:00) During school closures digital content usage increased. What tool did you use the most?
	2. (27:00) How do you communicate with your teachers this school year? How is this different from other school years?
	3. (31:00) What do you think schools and learning will look like in the future?
	4. (33:15-38:20) What learning experiences and tools do you like to use for your learning at school?
	5. (42:50-44:30) How do you use technology outside of school? What have you learned from those activities?
	Part II: Looking ahead with the data
	6. (48:50): Do you think that technology helps your teachers be able to teach you better? Why or why not?
	7. (50:00-51:03) More parents in 2020 said that using technology well is important for their children's future success. Do you agree or disagree? Why? (Note: Use data slides that follow in the presentation to further discuss your students' answers to this question)
	8. (55:36): What skills have you learned by playing digital games?
	9. (1:05:00-1:10:00) What do you think of online learning in 2020? What do you like best about it? What would you change?
	10. (1:15:00) Is there anything that you miss about in-person learning? How could the things you miss be better incorporated into digital learning?
	11. Once it is safe for everyone to return to school as normal, do you think school will look different in person than it did in the past? How do you think school will look next year?

Post-Congressional Briefing Activities

1. Contacting your representative of Congress to share thoughts or advocate for desired change:
    a. **Click here** if you need to find out your congressional district and congressional representative.
    b. Based on class discourse and student reflections, allow students a choice of one of the following prompts to write a letter to their representative:
        i. Tell your representative about your experience with remote learning. What has worked well for you? What changes would you like to see in digital learning?

> ii. Tell your representative about technology availability and usage at your school. What would you do to help make technology available for all students and schools?
>
> iii. You heard a lot of interesting data this morning based on responses from students like you all throughout the United States. Pick one piece of data that you'd like to share with your representative. Be sure to let them know the statistic, why it is important to you and what you would like to see done in the future to make education even better.

Note: You may choose to write a letter or email collectively as a class that all students can sign, have students work in groups or give students the option to all write their own letters to their representative.

2. Whole class debrief conversation
   a. It is likely that students heard new information that was either intriguing, surprising, worrying or elicited a mixture of emotions. Use the following discussion prompts to help students reflect on this experience either verbally or as a journaling activity:
      i. What did you learn today?
      ii. How are you feeling about digital learning and technology this year?
      iii. What do you think policy makers (people who make laws) need to know about being a student in 2020?
      iv. How can your experience help improve education for everyone? What can we do to make sure that people who make laws know how we feel and what we think about education in 2020?
3. School Community Work
   a. If your school is not part of the Speak Up initiative, register to learn more! Speak Up provides students, teachers and other stakeholders with the unique opportunity to provide feedback and make their voice heard on a variety of topics related to digital learning, access and technology.
   b. Although seen more commonly in middle school and high schools, student led councils can greatly improve student engagement with their community and begin to instill the

power of advocacy for students at an early age. If your school does not have a student council, or a similar student led group, consider gauging student interest to start this initiative at your school to include more student voice in the school community. Learn more about [What is A Student Council?](#) and [How to Start Your School's Student Council](#).

6th-8th Grade

Pre-Congressional Briefing Activities

1. Watch the iCivics: Legislative Branch and/or The United States Congress videos to help provide students with more context about what Congress is and what the role of Congress is in the United States.

    a. After watching the video, you can also play the iCivics: Legislative Branch games such as LawCraft and Represent Me! to help students experience what it may be like to be a member of Congress.

       Note: Games are only accessible after signing up for a free iCivics teacher account.

    b. Additionally, lesson plans hosted on iCivics.org such as "Congress in a Flash!" and "Why Do We Have a House and Senate, Anyway?" may be used to supplement student learning of Congress.

2. Review what the Speak Up Research Project is with students to provide context for research and surveys.

    The Speak Up Research Initiative, a national initiative of Project Tomorrow, is both a national research project and a free service to schools and districts everywhere. Since fall 2003, Speak Up has helped education leaders include the voices of their stakeholders in annual and long-term planning. More than 5 million participants have made Speak Up the largest collection of authentic, unfiltered stakeholder input on education, technology, schools of the future, science and math instruction, professional development and career exploration. National-level reports inform policymakers at all levels.

3. Have a class discussion to help students consider their own points of view and experiences regarding technology and digital learning:

    a. What role does technology currently play in student learning? How is this different than how technology was used in the past?

    b. How has the student learning experience changed this year? Do students like these changes? Why or why not?

    c. Do students feel that technology helps them learn? Why or why not?

During Congressional Briefing Discussion Guide

6th-8th	Part I: Reviewing the data
	1. (23:30-25:00) During school closures digital content usage increased. What tool did you most use?
	2. (26:00) What do you notice teachers said they needed based on the survey data?
	3. (27:00) What has your experience been like communicating with teachers? How has communication with teachers changed?
	4. (29:30) The number of students that said they texted with their teachers did not change much from 2015-2019, but it changed a lot during 2020. Why do you think that is?
	5. (38:20) What do you like or dislike about using technology for your work? What do you feel could be improved at your school?
	6. (42:50-44:30) How do you use technology outside of school to learn? What topics do you learn about outside of school?
	Part II: Looking ahead with the data
	7. (51:00-54:23) Which of the student survey results do you agree with most? Which of the student results do you find most surprising? Why?
	8. (54:30-55:36) What skill(s) do you feel you've developed most through digital games? How do these skills help you as a student in school?
	9. (57:25-59:32) What classes or topics would you be most interested in to learn more about life skills and career opportunities?
	10. How has socializing changed for you since school closures began? What role has technology played in socializing?
	11. (1:10:00) How has school closures changed the way your teachers use technology to provide support and instruction for their students?
	12. (1:15:00) Is there anything that you miss about in person learning? How could this be implemented in online learning?
	13. How are you able to share your thoughts and have a voice in your school community?

	14. Once it is safe for everyone to return to school as normal, do you think school will look different than it did in the past? How do you think school will look next year?

Post-Congressional Briefing Activities

1. Contacting Congress Representative to share thoughts or advocate for desired change:
    a. **Click here** if you need to find out your congressional district and congressional representative.
    b. Based on class discourse and student reflections, allow students a choice of one of the following prompts to write a letter to their representative:
        i. Tell your representative about your experience with remote learning. What has worked well for you? What changes would you like to see in digital learning?
        ii. Tell your representative about technology availability and usage at your school. What suggestions do you have for your representative to help make digital learning more available, fair and equal for all students?
2. Whole class debrief conversation
    a. It is likely that students heard new information that was either intriguing, surprising, worrying or elicited a mixture of emotions. Use the following discussion prompts to help students reflect on this experience either verbally or as a journaling activity:
        i. What information today stood out to you the most? Why?
        ii. Based on today's session, how are you feeling about digital learning and the changes to education in 2020? Why?
        iii. What do you think people who make laws should know about your experience as a student? How can your experience help further improve the digital learning experience for all students?
        iv. What do you feel is needed to make digital learning more accessible and effective for all students? Give at least one suggestion and a possible solution.
3. School Community Work
    a. If your school is not part of the Speak Up initiative, register to learn more! Speak Up provides students, teachers and other stakeholders with the unique opportunity to

provide feedback and make their voice heard on a variety of topics related to digital learning, access and technology.

b. Particularly at the middle school and high school levels, students can greatly benefit from student led councils. If your school does not have a student led council review [What is A Student Council?](#) and [How to Start Your School's Student Council](#) to help begin setting up this fantastic opportunity for students to have a space to use their voice for the betterment of their school community.

9ᵗʰ-12ᵗʰ Grade

Pre-Congressional Briefing Activities

1. Structure of Congress- Lesson Plan from PBS.org helps introduce students to the structure of Congress and the legislative process in one to two class periods.

2. Legislative Resources: How Congress Works from archives.gov provides numerous resources to help students learn what Congress does by examining primary resources, exploring simplified versions of the legislative process and other methods.

During Congressional Briefing Discussion Guide

9ᵗʰ-12th	Part I: Reviewing the data
	1. (23:30-25:00) During school closures digital content usage increased. What tool(s) helped you learn the most? What tool(s) do you want to use more in the future?
	2. (26:00) What do you notice about teachers' needs based on the survey data?
	3. (27:00) What has your experience been like communicating with your teachers in 2020? How has communication with teachers changed?
	4. (27:00- 29:30) The number of students that said they texted with their teachers did not change much from 2015-2019, but it changed a lot during 2020. Why do you think that is?
	5. (33:15-38:20) What learning tools do you find most effectively support your learning? How do you think could technology be used more effectively for learning?
	6. (42:30) How do you use technology outside of school to learn? What skills do you learn through these activities?
	Part II: Looking ahead with the data
	7. (45:00- 47:45) Based on the data, more people this year see technology as a learning platform and tool rather than just a way to engage students in learning. What do you think has caused this change?
	8. (48:50) Do you feel that technology helps your teachers be more effective? Why or why not?
	9. (49:30) How do you want to see technology used in your future learning? Give at least 1 suggestion of how technology could be used differently to enhance learning.

10. (50:00 – 51:03) During and after school closures, 75% of parents say that effective use of technology in school is important for their child's future success. Why do you think parent perspectives changed so drastically in 2020?

11. (57:25-1:02:55) The student panelists shared a few of their ideas about how technology can help high school students learn real life skills. What real life skills do you feel can be better taught in school with the use of technology?

12. (1:05:00-1:10:19) In what ways do you think technology can be used to help students, teachers and families address social and mental health concerns? Is there any way to improve how technology is currently being used to address these concerns?

13. (1:10:00-1:20:00) What do you feel are the best ways for you to share your thoughts and have a voice in your school community?

14. (1:10:00-1:20:00) Once it is safe for everyone to return to school as normal, do you think school will look different than it did in the past? How do you think school will look next year?

Post-Congressional Briefing Activities

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      ii. Tell your representative about technology availability and usage at your school. What suggestions do you have for your representative to help make digital learning more available, fair and equal for all students?

2. Whole class debrief conversation:
   a. It is likely that students heard new information that was either intriguing, surprising, worrying or elicited a mixture of emotions. Use the following discussion prompts to help students reflect on this experience either verbally and/or as a journaling activity:

    i.   What information today stood out to you the most? Why?

    ii.   Based on today's session, how are you feeling about digital learning and the changes to education in 2020? What improvements need to be made in the future? Why?

    iii.   You're now better informed on some of the data and trends in digital learning and student feedback about their experience. What do you think policy makers should know about your experience as a student? How can your experience help further improve the digital learning experience for all students?

    iv.   What do you feel is needed to make digital learning more accessible and effective for all students? Give at least one suggestion and a possible solution.

    v.   Imagine you had the opportunity to speak to your Congress representative. What are the three most important issues that you think need immediate attention? What challenges do these issues present for students in 2020? If not addressed, what challenges could these issues present for students in 2021 and beyond?

3. School Community Work

    a.   If your school is not part of the Speak Up initiative, register to learn more! Speak Up provides students, teachers and other stakeholders with the unique opportunity to provide feedback and make their voice heard on a variety of topics related to digital learning, access and technology.

    b.   Particularly at the middle school and high school levels, students can greatly benefit from student led councils. If your school does not have a student led council review What is A Student Council? and How to Start Your School's Student Council to help begin setting up this fantastic opportunity for students to have a space to use their voice for the betterment of their school community.