**Developing Problem-Solution Counter Arguments Chart**

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|  | **Your information** | **Generic counter argument prompts** | **Make these counter arguments specific to your topic** | **Your responses** |
| **What is the PROBLEM?** |  | 1. You’re overstating the problem. It isn’t that big a deal.  2. Someone else is already busy solving this problem. We don’t need to do anything.  3. This problem is a small problem compared to other problems like\_\_\_\_\_\_. |  |  |
| **Why does this problem require action NOW? (What bad things will happen if we wait?)** |  | We should just wait. We have more pressing concerns to worry about first. |  |  |
| **What is your PLAN for solving this problem?** |  | 1. This plan isn’t any different from what \_\_\_\_\_\_ group is already doing (so you aren’t really advocating for change).  2. This plan sounds good, but it would be impossible to implement because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  3. This plan overlooks \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ realities. |  |  |
| **WHO needs to implement this change? (Who is your audience?)** |  | We aren’t the ones who should be responsible for making this change. It should really be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. |  |  |

Chart completed with sample argument

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **My information** | **Generic counter argument prompts** | **Make these counter arguments specific to your topic** | **My responses** |
| **What is the PROBLEM?** | Even though most medical research strongly supports the health benefits of fresh fruits and vegetables, especially organic vegetables high in antioxidants, school lunches typically include few. Those included usually travel a thousand miles or more (thus increasing our dependence on foreign fuel) and are selected for their low perishability and cost rather than their nutritional value or taste. Additionally, in spite of an increase in farmers markets nationwide, local farmers of organic fruits and vegetables need more help finding reliable local markets for their produce. | 1. You’re overstating the problem. It isn’t that big a deal.  2. Someone else is already busy solving this problem. We don’t need to do anything.  3. This problem is a small problem compared to other problems like\_\_\_\_\_\_. | 1. The health benefits of organic produce don’t outweigh the additional costs.  2. There are already national standards for school lunches. Those are sufficient.  3. We should be more concerned about test scores than school lunches. | 1. Not when one considers the true costs of health care.  2. Those standards have not been substantively changed in the past 40 years.  3. Studies have shown a link between good nutrition and high test scores. Providing better food for our students could improve test scores. |
| **Why does this problem require action NOW? (What bad things will happen if we wait?)** | For many students, the food they eat in school may be the most nutritious they eat all day. When this food is poor quality, students are more likely to develop poor eating habits, leading to increased risk of disease and other health problems. Additionally, if we are to have a viable network of small organic farmers, we must provide them with reliable markets for their produce. Bringing organic produce into the schools could provide such markets, leading to an overall increased availability of organic produce. | We should just wait. We’re in the middle of an economic downturn. We have more pressing concerns to worry about first. | Organic produce costs more than conventional produce. Under federal standards, only \_\_\_\_\_\_ is allocated for a student’s lunch. It would be impossible to offer local, organic produce at that price. | We could fund the increased cost through use of vending machine funds. |
| **What is your PLAN for solving this problem?** | First, our district should schedule a town hall meeting, coordinated through the USDA’s small farms/ school meals initiative, in order to discuss options for improving the school district’s offerings of fresh fruits and vegetables within the school day. All stakeholders would be invited to this meeting (including: students, parents, community members, food service providers, farmers, administrators, teachers, board members and representatives from the USDA). Second, the district would create a task force of interested parties to visit districts participating in the small farms/school meals program. Third, the district would create an action plan that would offer classroom instruction on nutrition, classroom visits by farmers and opportunities for field trips to farms. Local produce would be offered during the lunch periods, according to its availability. | 1. This plan isn’t any different from what \_\_\_\_\_\_ group is already doing (so you aren’t really advocating for change).  2. This plan sounds good, but it would be impossible to implement because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_.  3. This plan overlooks \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ realities. | 1. Kids like fried foods. If you make fruits and vegetables available, they’ll just go to waste.  2. Our district has a contract with \_\_\_\_\_ to provide all food services. This plan would force the district to violate the contract.  3. This plan would require coordination between many diverse groups. The reality is that people just don’t care enough to work this hard. | 1. Some students may still choose to eat fried foods, however if we adequately educate our students about the nutritional advantages, students will choose the local fruits and vegetables.  2. We will need to look for creative solutions to this problem, involving our vendor from the beginning.  3. It will take time and effort, but the increase nationally in farmers markets and the success of stores like Whole Foods shows that there is a shift in Americans’ thoughts regarding food. There is interest. (Use stats on growing market share of organic produce to support this.) |
| **WHO needs to implement this change?** | Local school board members, school administrators, parents, students and school food service providers | We aren’t the ones who should be responsible for making this change. It should really be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. | If this is so important, national standards for school lunches should be changed. | National standards should be updated since they have not been substantively revised in the past 40 years, however our plan focuses on local measures that could improve the health of our children now. There is a long tradition of schools enacting higher standards than are required in order to improve the lives of their students. |