The Hot Takes Society

Parkland Community Library

Children

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Tweens (10-12)

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Teens

The Hot Takes Society

Sep 25, 2026

$1-50

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Byline

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The Hot Takes Society is a debate club for beginners. It's intended to prepare them to listen to and debate a topic respectfully.

Can pineapple belong on pizza? Should homework be optional? Is artificial intelligence helping or hurting society? Every meeting features a new age-

appropriate topic where debaters learn to think critically, communicate clearly, and respectfully explore different viewpoints.

This program focuses on discussion, teamwork, and confidence-building in a welcoming environment.

Advanced Planning

I planned The Hot Takes Society to help meet Pennsylvania's civic and social literacy requirements while giving kids a fun, low-pressure way to practice critical thinking, communication, and respectful disagreement. The goal was for participants to learn how to form an opinion, explain their reasoning, listen to different perspectives, and disagree without being disrespectful.

I began planning about a month and a half before the first program. I developed a set of group norms to establish expectations for respectful discussion, as well as a simple "How to Debate" guide that walks participants through each round. Since the program is intended for kids/teens, I wanted the format to feel structured without becoming too formal or intimidating.

Each debate is built around an age-appropriate "hot take," with a mix of silly and more thought-provoking topics. Participants choose whether they are FOR or AGAINST the statement by physically moving to the corresponding side of the room. They are then given time to work with their group, develop their arguments, and decide how they want to present them. Each debate lasts approximately 30 minutes and includes time for opening arguments, responses, discussion, and closing thoughts.

One of the biggest considerations during planning was creating an environment where kids could disagree with each other while still feeling comfortable participating. The group norms became an important part of the program design because the focus is not on "winning" the debate. Instead, the emphasis is on learning how to support an opinion, hear another point of view, and participate in a respectful conversation.

Marketing

The Hot Takes Society was promoted through several of the library's regular marketing channels. The program was included in multiple e-newsletters leading up to the event, and our marketing department created a flyer that was displayed throughout the library. The program was also featured on our in-library events TV, which highlights upcoming programs for patrons while they are visiting the library.

Budgeting

This program can easily be done at little to no cost. The only materials I used were notebooks for each participant. I found a stack of composition notebooks in our supply area and turned them into Hot Takes Society notebooks by printing a cover and gluing in copies of the group norms and "How to Debate" guide.

The notebooks are completely optional! If your library does not already have notebooks available, there is no need to purchase them. The group norms and debate instructions can simply be printed as handouts, displayed in the room, or reviewed together at the beginning of the program. Other than basic printing and supplies your library likely already has on hand, there are no required expenses.

Day-of-event Activity

The setup for The Hot Takes Society was very simple. Before the program, I connected a laptop to the TV in the program room so the presentation, debate topics, instructions, and timing could be displayed for participants throughout the program. I also made sure the room (tables and chairs) was set up and had enough open space for participants to physically move to the FOR or AGAINST side of the room when choosing their position.

The program only required one staff member to facilitate, keep the debates moving, monitor time, and help guide the conversation when needed. I did not encounter any unexpected challenges during set-up or the program itself.

Program Execution

I would put more emphasis on targeted marketing in the future. I would reach out directly to local schools to let teachers and families know about the program, especially because of its connection to civic and social literacy skills. I would also consider creating a short social media reel showing how The Hot Takes Society works. The name is fun, but it does not necessarily tell caregivers what happens during the program. A quick video demonstrating the FOR/AGAINST format and giving a few sample topics could make the concept easier to understand and help reach more participants

Advice

Consider supplying food! Food always brings kids in, but you can tie this to the debate.

Did you try this program at your library? Share your experience using this form.

Supporting Materials

Document
Group norms_How to.pdf
Document
Notebook Cover.pdf
Document
September 2026.pptx
Download this Program as a PDF

- Programming Librarian Facebook Group

Slideshow Images

Image

More Programs

Dec 17, 2025
Tweens (10-12)+ | $
Image

Tech Take-Apart

Audiences:

Tweens (10-12)
Sep 22, 2025
Teens (13-16)+ | $
Image

Persona Building for Teens

Audiences:

Teens (13-16)
Dec 12, 2024
Intergenerational+ | □□
Image

Young Author Talk Series

Audiences:

Intergenerational