



# **SIRS Researcher®**

## ***Leading Issues***

# ***Mini-Research Guide***

**Provides Teachers With:**

**Critical Thinking Strategies  
Digital Information Literacy Models  
Flexible Technology Integration  
Rubrics Assessment Tool for Evaluation**

**INCLUDES:**

- New report format that saves teachers classroom time and correlates with a variety of *Leading Issues*
- Critical thinking strategies are integrated into template design and reporting/presentation models
- Ensure relevancy and focus for high school students with editorially selected documents and models
- New technology techniques integrated for using digital information to create projects and reports
- Flexible Rubrics evaluation model for teachers and students
- Bloom's taxonomy and the value of inquiry-based writing and learning activities
- Comparing the value of term papers with *Leading Issues* mini-research model

Information becomes **KNOWLEDGE** only when it is used by students to make comparisons, predict consequences, evaluate effectiveness, resolve issues, solve problems, and then is communicated to an audience with a purpose.

<p><b>Higher-Order Thinking Levels (HOTS)</b></p>	<p><b><u>BLOOM'S TAXONOMY—Bloom, B. S. (1956)</u></b> <i>Type of Critical Thinking Skills Demonstrated</i></p>
<p><b>KNOWLEDGE</b></p> <p>Most Student Multiple Choice Testing at This Lowest Level</p> <p>(Lowest Level)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation and recall of information</li> <li>• Knowledge of dates, events, places</li> <li>• Knowledge of major ideas</li> <li>• Mastery of subject matter</li> </ul> <p><i>Question Cues:</i> list, define, tell, describe, identify, show, label, collect, examine, tabulate, quote, name, who, when, where, etc.</p>
<p><b>COMPREHENSION</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding information</li> <li>• Grasp meaning</li> <li>• Translate knowledge into new context</li> <li>• Interpret facts, compare, contrast</li> <li>• Order, group, infer causes</li> <li>• Predict consequences</li> </ul> <p><i>Question Cues:</i> summarize, describe, interpret, contrast, predict, associate, discuss, distinguish, estimate, differentiate, extend</p>
<p><b>APPLICATION</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use information</li> <li>• Use methods, concepts, theories in new situations</li> <li>• Solve problems using required skills or knowledge</li> </ul> <p><i>Questions Cues:</i> apply, demonstrate, calculate, complete, illustrate, solve, examine, modify, relate, classify, experiment, discover</p>
<p><b>ANALYSIS</b></p> <p>Research Activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeing patterns</li> <li>• Organization of parts</li> <li>• Recognition of hidden meanings</li> <li>• Identification of components</li> </ul> <p><i>Question Cues:</i> analyze, separate, order, explain, connect, classify, arrange, divide, compare, select, explain, infer</p>
<p><b>SYNTHESIS</b></p> <p>Research Activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use old ideas to create new ones</li> <li>• Generalize from given facts</li> <li>• Relate knowledge from several areas</li> <li>• Predict, draw conclusions</li> </ul> <p><i>Question Cues:</i> combine, integrate, modify, rearrange, substitute, create, design, invent, what if?, compose, formulate, generalize</p>
<p><b>EVALUATION</b></p> <p>Research Activities</p> <p>(Highest Level)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compare and discriminate between ideas</li> <li>• Assess value of theories, presentations</li> <li>• Make choices based on reasoned argument</li> <li>• Verify value of evidence</li> <li>• Recognize subjectivity</li> </ul> <p><i>Question Cues:</i> assess, decide, rank, grade, test, measure, judge, recommend, explain, discriminate, support, conclude, summarize</p>

## SIRS LEADING ISSUES SUPPORTS THE NEW SAT WRITING INITIATIVE

Several new initiatives have occurred recently that recognize the renewed importance of **writing as an essential activity for student learning**. **WRITING ON ISSUES IS ALWAYS A PART OF EVERY LEADING ISSUES MINI-RESEARCH ACTIVITY.**

- Research shows that the number of **writing activities assigned in the K-12 classroom has diminished** and been replaced by increasing use of multiple choice assessments which require less teacher time and effort to grade.
- Research shows that narrative, **expository**, and **persuasive writing** requires the use of **higher-order thinking skills (HOTS)**. HOTS are essential for permanent learning. Rote learning is temporary and soon fades unless students get an opportunity to apply information to **real-life problems**.
- Research shows that the most important factor for college success is the **ability to write**.
  - Research shows that reading and writing are learned more effectively when **integrated, as in relevant research activities**.

### To motivate more writing activities across the curriculum because of their value . . . . .

- The new SAT will require writing samples that **express student ideas on a variety of issues** to mitigate writing deficiencies discovered in an increasingly greater number of high school graduates.
- Colleges have recently put more emphasis on evaluating writing samples in the **admissions process**.
- The College Board revised the new SAT (2005) to include an essay writing component to **encourage more writing assignments for students**
- The College Board indicates that **strong writing skills** are a reliable and essential **predictor of college success**

### National Commission on Writing in America's School and Colleges activities in K-12

1. NCW – “Writing is essential to educational and career success”
2. NCW – “Writing allows students to ‘**connect the dots**’ in their knowledge and is central to self-expression”
3. NCW – “**Writing** is how we teach students the complex skills of **analysis, synthesis, and problem solving**”
4. NCW – “Writing must become an important focus **beginning with elementary school**”
5. NCW – “Assessment with only **multiple-choice tests** is not adequate”

## Outline of the Leading Issues Mini-Research Process

**Pages 3 through 10 of this document can be used to provide a model of the activity and a possible evaluation process. Teachers should understand this process and discuss the models and the steps with the students before making an assignment.**

**Step 1: Developing basic knowledge:** Read the topic summary to understand the basics of the discussion about the leading issue and why the issue is important.

**Step 2: Understanding differences of opinion:** Read the viewpoint summaries and the hyperlinked articles to understand where the points of difference on the leading issue reside...

1. Select at least 2 articles that *support* the issue
2. Save these articles for use in the following steps
3. Open the articles that you saved for deeper reading and analysis
4. Open a blank word processing document. This will become your **Draft Summary** (see model provided in this document)
5. Critically read each article and copy and paste the SIRS citation and any significant ideas, opinions, and facts from each article into the blank *Draft Summary* (try to keep this section to 1-2 pages)
6. Select at least 2 articles that *oppose* the issue
7. Copy and paste citations and significant ideas, opinions, and facts into the *Draft Summary*
8. Save and print the *Draft Summary* (use a file name that includes the issue language)
9. Show the *Draft Summary* to your teacher for approval of your research analysis of the 4 articles

**Step 3: Separating Fact from Opinion:** Use the articles you selected for the *Draft Summary* and find information that answers the following questions to clarify the competing viewpoints on the issue:

- Provide 2 examples of people or groups supporting the issue
  - List the reasons they are in favor of the issue
  - Of the reasons provided, identify at least 2 facts and 2 opinions
1. Use your *Draft Summary* file to find sentences and paragraphs that provide answers to the questions above. Use shades of **light green** to change the **color** of the text that provides the best examples of significant information
  2. Repeat Step 3 to find and **highlight** information that answers the questions for the different perspectives. Use shades of **light red** to mark this text.

**Step 4: Making up your own mind:** Using the facts and opinions from the *Draft Summary*, write an original and reasoned opinion that *supports* or *opposes* the issue being researched. Your reasoned opinion should be about 150 words.

1. Use the report model provided later in this guide
2. Use your *Draft Summary* to help organize your ideas and writing
3. Integrate the answers to the **essential questions** included in Step 4 in your original and reasoned opinion
4. Copy and paste excerpts and citations from the *Draft Summary* to your final written report, using the model format provided

## Mini-Research Model of a Draft Summary of Significant Information and SIRS Researcher Citations Using the Resources Listed in Step 2

### Teacher Approves Summary of at Least 4 Resources to Be Used in Writing Final Report

Title: Stem Cell Research Tops '99 Science  
Source: Providence Journal-Bulletin (Providence, RI)  
Author: Paul Recer  
Publication Date: Dec. 16, 1999  
Page Number: n.p.  
Database: SIRS Researcher

**Copy/paste only significant information parts here:** The editors of Science have selected the new stem cell research as the "Breakthrough of the Year" for 1999. A report appearing Friday in the journal said the new technology "raises hopes of dazzling medical applications." But the research also created a troubling ethical debate that was heard throughout the year in the White House, in Congress and in laboratories coast to coast. Embryonic stem cells are the ancestral cells that give rise to all of the tissues and organs in the body. Researchers believe that such cells, taken from human embryos or fetuses, could be directed to grow replacements for ailing hearts, livers or other organs. Use of embryonic stem cells has been denounced by some members of Congress and by antiabortion groups

Title: To Kass, Science's Sword Cuts Both Ways: Bioethicist Sees 'Tragedy'...  
Source: USA Today  
Author: Dan Vergano  
Publication Date: Oct. 30, 2002  
Page Number: n.p.  
Database: SIRS Researcher

**Copy/paste only significant information parts here:** Bioethicist Leon Kass looks at the same promise and sees a Brave New World looming ahead. Death, suffering and ignorance of one's genetic destiny aren't such bad things, Kass argues in his new book, "Life, Liberty and the Defense of Dignity". The head of the President's Council on Bioethics, **Kass warns that while biotechnology may be able to eliminate some of these burdens, it will take with them some of the virtues that make life meaningful and dignified, in his view.** Kass was identified as a key adviser behind the administration's plan, which allows federal funding of research on existing colonies, or lines, of embryonic stem cells, but bans it for any embryos created after the Aug. 9, 2001 announcement of Bush's policy. That dignity, he says, "rests on the fact our lives are limited and we know it."

Modern medicine's pursuit of cures for misery-causing diseases is really an immortality hunt that threatens to stampede humankind into a world of sterile perfection, he warns. For example, he argues against the unquestioned pursuit of genetic testing: "Many people, taking their bearings from life lived open-endedly rather than from preventive medicine practiced rationally, would prefer ignorance of the future," he writes. "I'm not saying suffering is a good thing," Kass adds, but it may be a requirement for people to lead fulfilling lives. **Medicine's pursuit of perfection threatens this opportunity, he suggests in the book. Immortality once gained through genetic engineering may erase the human drive toward improvement, setting society on a course both bland and barren.**

Title: Two Approaches to Stem Cell Research Debate: U.S. and Sweden  
Source: San Jose Mercury News (San Jose, CA)  
**Author: Dan Lee**  
Publication Date: April 28, 2003  
Page Number: n.p.  
Database: SIRS Researcher

**Copy/paste only significant information parts here:** The opinions in each country are formed around some of the most fundamental questions in medicine: When does life begin? At what point of development does an embryo, or a fetus, gain full protection of law? Is it justifiable to destroy a human embryo if that research could eventually lead to treatments or even cures for ailments including cancer, diabetes, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and heart disease? Should

this research be federally funded? In 1982, Hamberger's group was behind the first IVF baby in Scandinavia. Now, he is focused on culturing embryos that will never be transferred to a woman's uterus but will be destroyed to yield embryonic stem cells. And those cells, he and others say, could lead to treatments for some of humanity's most dreaded conditions.

In 2001, President Bush ruled that U.S. funding could go toward only previously established lines of embryonic stem cells. Those lines had to be derived from spare embryos from fertility treatments that were donated with the couple's consent. Critics of embryonic stem cell research, including the Catholic Church and some medical professionals, say that those embryos should be protected and that such research is immoral. To produce stem cells, researchers culture an embryo into a blastocyst that has an inner cell mass of about 30 cells--those cells that could ultimately give rise to the fetus. That stem-cell-producing inner cell mass is then removed, destroying the embryo. *Life begins at fertilization, when the "genetic code is complete and operative," according to the group. That means that the embryos are not just clusters of cells but "are the tiniest of human beings."*

Title: Scientists in Florida See Danger in a Cloning Ban  
Source: Miami Herald (Miami, FL)  
**Author: John Dorschner**  
Publication Date: March 20, 2002  
Page Number: 1A+  
Database: SIRS Researcher

***Copy/paste only significant information parts here:*** "Researchers in medical schools are not trying to create Frankenstein monsters to end up on the cover of Newsweek," says Dennis Steindler, a professor of neuroscience who does stem cell research at the University of Florida medical school. "We are the people who get phone calls from the very sick people asking us to help them. And that's what we're doing."

Richard L. Bucciarelli, legislative liaison for the Gainesville medical school, says the University of Florida is opposed to the legislation. "The research is about a mass of cells in a petri dish. You can't go very far cloning a human in a petri dish." Bucciarelli says the university is supporting an amendment in the Senate that would outlaw inserting a clone-based egg in a woman's uterus--the only way to clone a human--but would allow therapeutic cloning of cells for research. Scientists are concerned that the bill would ban fundamental therapeutic research into ways to reproduce stem cells that could later be used to help suffering patients. This research involves injecting the nucleus of a cell--it could come from skin scraped from a human cheek--into a human egg. After several days, this nucleus divides into stem cells, embryonic entities that have the "wondrous ability to regenerate," Goodman says. "Put them into brains, and they become brain cells." Under the House bill, this would be illegal human cloning. *Scientists' ultimate hope is that the research could lead to stem cells that could help regenerate everything from nerve tissue in paralyzed persons to organs wracked by cancer or degenerative disease.* Researchers say a Florida ban would mean that experiments would stop while scientists elsewhere in the United States and the world forged ahead with their studies.

Title: The Cloning Clash  
Source: Christian Science Monitor  
**Author: Gregory M. Lamb**  
Publication Date: Nov. 6, 2003  
Page Number: n.p.  
Database: SIRS Researcher

***Copy/paste only significant information parts here:*** Even the scientific value of stem-cell research using embryos is disputed, though the vast majority of the American scientific community sees enough promise to favor ongoing research. Some cloning opponents argue that stem cells taken from adults will prove to be a viable alternative to embryonic stem cells. But while a few scientists do hold out great hope for adult stem-cell research, "most scientists would say adult stem cells are not a substitute for embryonic stem cells."

Some scientists argue that the word "cloning" has eerie science-fiction connotations and perhaps scares the public more than is necessary--especially when it comes to therapeutic cloning. "A lot of people are confused by this debate," says Mr. Goodman. For example, he says, if you say you have placed a bit of human skin cell into an egg and then five days later harvested the stem cells that have grown, people will say that's fine. *But if you call it*

"cloning," people are likely to oppose it. "The name has become an emotional sledgehammer," he says. "I think it's a good impulse for the world to try to come together and speak with one mind about what we'd like to do about [cloning]," Holland says. "But I don't think it can be outlawed. It's going to happen somewhere if somebody wants to do it."

1. Each source citation is **copied and pasted** from the original document in SIRS Researcher format, **avoiding complex formal style transformations and saving learning time.**
2. Each of the **essential information** sentences and paragraphs are copied and pasted from original documents based on their relevance to the issue presented for research and the essential questions, demonstrating **critical reading skills.**
3. The teacher reviews and approves this *Draft Summary* document prior the written report. This ensures the relevancy and adequacy of the information gathered by the student and also helps in the organization and writing of the final report.
4. This *Draft Summary* is integrated with (or attached to) the final report to serve as an informal bibliography (works cited) and to help **validate** that the report is original and **not plagiarized.**

**LEADING ISSUES Model Format Integrates Draft Summary with Final Report**

**ISSUE: STEM CELL RESEARCH WITH HUMAN EMBRYOS SHOULD BE SUBSIDIZED**

**Summary of My Reasoned Opinion—by Model Student** (About 150 words answering the essential questions provided in Step 4)

Stem cell research with human embryos has the potential to develop breakthrough cures for a host of genetic diseases that kill millions of Americans and other people in foreign countries. Stem cells are basic cells that develop first in human embryos after fertilization. All other specialized cells in the human body evolve from stem cells by a process that is not fully understood today. By understanding this process, scientists could grow new organs and other specialized cells to replace damaged or diseased cells in human beings, and thereby prolong and extend the quality of their life.

Why would this research not be acceptable and even be supported by everyone? Those who oppose this research argue that it is immoral to use human embryos because in the research process you are destroying a potential human being. Others who support the research argue that by not engaging in research, we are allowing the destruction of existing human beings.

I support the right to do research on existing embryos and if necessary, to have new sources of voluntary donations to increase the supply. If research in our country is stopped, then it will continue in some other country that may not have the best interests of the health of American citizens in mind.

History has shown that when major scientific discoveries have occurred, they are always challenged by religious groups who predict all sorts of dire consequences for humanity. History has also shown that, when these discoveries are adopted and managed well, human beings have always benefited. Many examples of this are second nature to us now: blood transfusions, organ transplantation, vaccination, etc.

**Information that Addresses:** Who **supports** this research and why? (summarize and cite at least 2 of the resources provided in Step 2)

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**Most Significant Fact:** (copy and paste from the Draft Summary)

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**Information that Addresses:** Who **opposes** this position and why? (summarize and cite at least 2 of the resources provided in Step 2)

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<b>Flexible Rubrics for Evaluating Leading Issues Mini-Research Reports</b>
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Mini-research reports **are not term papers**. They need to be relatively easy to evaluate to encourage teachers to assign these valuable learning activities. For this reason, this *rubrics model* will focus *mostly* on the research process (and the inherent *higher-order thinking skills--HOTS*), not solely on the traditional criteria of correctness of the ideas, or the mechanics and format of the content. Critical thinking elements are shown in (*red bolded italicized text*).

**Teachers can create their own system** by varying the *Worth* factor or by including additional criteria or excluding existing criteria. Judging the score can be equated to assigning a letter grade (example: Worth = 10, Value = B, Score = 8). Use this model as a guide, but keep it simple!

Recommended Evaluative Criteria	Worth	Score
1. The <b>Draft Summary</b> of the researched information provided a <i>balance of viewpoints and was relevant and sufficient</i> to answer the essential questions in step 4. ( <i>critical reading, analyzing, organizing</i> )	20	20
2. The report answered the <b>essential questions</b> effectively ( <i>synthesizing</i> )	20	18
3. The report provided evidence that the student could separate fact from opinion ( <i>analysis</i> )	15	15
4. The final report was convincing and provided key facts and opinions that supported the original thought in the conclusion ( <i>synthesizing</i> )	15	12
5. The report demonstrated a high level of use of <i>correct language arts mechanics</i> ( <i>editing and communicating</i> )	15	12
6. The report is both meaningful and interesting to other readers ( <i>creativity</i> )	5	4
7. The report used mini-research <i>recommended format models</i> correctly ( <i>organization</i> )	10	10
<b>Totals</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>91</b>

## SIRS Researcher vs. Google and Web Surfing

SIRS for Teacher and Student Curriculum-Relevant Information	Googling and Internet Surfing for Curriculum-Relevant Information
Why do so many teachers and students think that Google and other Internet surfing are superior to their own library CUSTOM print and digital learning resources collections that they can access from school or at home?	Do doctors, lawyers, engineers, financial analysts, and other professionals search Google for information to solve problems for clients? These professionals subscribe to custom and authoritative print and online databases to keep them current and help solve client problems.
100% of SIRS is K-12 curriculum-relevant for teachers and students.	Less than 10% of Google is K-12 curriculum-relevant and is focused mostly on consumer-related information.
Editorially selected quality articles and websites that are reviewed and updated regularly and meet K-12 curriculum and state standards.	High percentage of information is not updated regularly and may be created by questionable sources.
Thousands of editorially selected newspapers, magazines, maps, correlated graphics, literature, reference sources to match curriculum, student interest, and reading levels.	Searches do not include access to newspapers and curriculum-relevant magazines and journal archives because this <b>information is copyrighted and only available through subscription databases.</b>
Accurate summaries of each article and website provide students and teachers with information that saves time for higher-order thinking and writing.	Summaries include phrases based on keyword searches and may or may not be accurate and time-saving for students and teachers.
Reading level designations for all articles via the use of Lexile numbers.	No method for adjusting results to student reading levels.
Dictionary and Thesaurus support for reading with understanding and enrichment--No Child Left Behind.	No equivalent feature for students to use.
<i>Tagged List</i> provides students with a list of selected resources and citations for use in writing reports.	No equivalent feature for students to use.
Citation models and support built into interface.	No equivalent feature for students to use.
Publisher-quality content and quality websites address parent and administrative concerns about the risks of student Internet surfing.	Minimal or user-activated filters and no direct controls over authority and decency of websites.
Tutorials and other learning resources provide support for functionality and information literacy skills.	No equivalent feature for students to use.
Spotlights and other special topic features that connect students and teachers to current content in traditional areas of study.	Higher-order learning time wasted in determining curriculum-relevancy and accuracy of website information.
All articles and websites correlated to K-12 curriculum, textbooks, state and national academic standards.	Content not correlated to state standards and national standards and there are no correlated learning resources.

## Mini-Research Models and Strategies vs. Traditional Term Papers

<i>Traditional Term Papers</i>	<i>ProQuest Mini-Research Reports</i>
Formal—written	Informal—written, oral, PowerPoint
Lengthy, Time-Consuming and Infrequent	Brief, 2-3 Class Periods, and More Frequent
Traditional and Scholarly Topics	Current, Relevant and Engaging Topics
Focus on College and College-Bound	Focus on ALL Students and State Standards, Reading, and Writing Skills
Traditional Methods and Formats	Technology-Enabled Methods and Formats
English and Social Studies	All Subjects and All Levels
Focus on Formal Formats, Citations and Bibliography	Focus on Higher-Order Thinking, Expression of Original Thought and Reasoned Opinion, and Problem Solving
Traditional Topics Prone to Copying and Plagiarism	Mini-Research Method and Original Thought Topics Help Prevent Plagiarism
Focus on Individual Effort, Print Output and Teacher as Audience	Open to Collaboration with Team Reports, Multimedia and PowerPoint Presentations, Variety of Print Formats, and Peer Audience for Motivation
Students Generally Limited to Local and Traditional Print Resources	Students Encouraged to Use a Variety of Digital Media from Respected and Copyrighted Sources