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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2018 Volume V: Manipulating Biology: Costs, Benefits and Controversies

Vaccines and the Outbreak of Nonsense

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by Thomas Teague

Today's world is full of conflicting information! Unfortunately, this includes the world of science, and vaccines have become ground zero for bad information. The science is in, and vaccines are safe and effective. This 3-week unit intends to teach the science of vaccines for 7th grade science students, harnessing Next Generation Science Standard MS-LS4-5: Gather and synthesize information about the technologies that have changed the way humans influence the inheritance of desired traits in organisms. Students will learn how vaccines have drastically changed the course of diseases and saved millions of lives while building critical literacy skills and the ability to differentiate between sources of information. The history of vaccination and germ theory is also the history of science itself. Activities for this unit include an introductory activity where students will refute the flat Earth idea and debate the quality of different sources of evidence. Case studies and close reading strategies will be utilized before students have a seminar over an 1804 cartoon about vaccination. Finally, students will do independent research and create a presentation sharing evidence for whether or not vaccines should be mandatory.

(Developed for Science 2, grade 7)

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