Connecting Evidence to a Claim: Teacher Model

**Claim: Because teens are impulsive, we should change the driving age to 18.**

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| Source:    2. “The teenage brain” by Amanda Leigh Mascarelli, in *Science News for Students* (https://student.societyforscience.org) | | |
| ***Evidence***  ***from the article***  ***(fact, statistic, quote, etc.)***  ***What facts can I find about teens being impulsive in their thinking?*** | ***Connection:***  **How could you connect the evidence to your purpose? How can you help readers see the RELEVANCE or importance of this fact to the context or situation? How and why does this evidence support your claim? Give examples.**  ***How can I use these facts about teens being impulsive thinkers to show that being impulsive isn’t a good trait for a driver and that we should raise the driving age?*** | ***Possible Outcome or Result:***  **What might happen if we use this evidence to make a decision about how we’ll think, act, or believe?**  ***What do I think might happen if we raise the driving age to 18?*** |
| *The text says…*  Teens don’t always think ahead to consequences because their brains are still developing. | *This makes me think…*  It’s important to plan ahead when you’re driving. Teens can get themselves into dangerous situations if they don’t plan ahead. That means checking that there is gas in the tank and money in your pocket, in case of emergencies.  Even more dangerous are those spur-of-the-moment decisions that cost lives. One example of impulsive driving was when my son first started driving at age 16. He was in the far left lane on the expressway. Suddenly he decided he wanted to get off the highway at the exit he was near. He swooped across four lanes of traffic instead of easing over and taking the next exit. He quickly found out what a dangerous stunt this was when a state trooper pulled him over and gave him a ticket. | *If we do this…*  Raising the driving age will give teenagers more time to develop their abilities to plan ahead and avoid negative consequences. |
| *The text says…*  Teens are more easily influenced by friends, desires and emotions than adults are. This is because of brain chemical known as dopamine. Dopamine makes us feel good. It is so powerful in teens that they sometimes take big risks. This effect is greatest between ages 13 and 17. | *This makes me think…*  Taking risks can also be an example of impulsive behavior. Perhaps this is why we hear about teen drivers taking chances. Teens are more likely to do things they know that they shouldn’t. Egged on by their friends, they sometimes speed and even drag-race. | *If we do this…*  Drivers who are 18 and older are not as quick to give in to peer pressure because their dopamine levels are lower. |
| *The text says…*  The adolescent brain is in a tug-of-war, logic vs. impulsiveness. “Although teens can make good decisions, ‘in the heat of the moment—even when they know better,’” the ventral stiatum can win.”--B.J. Casey of Cornell University | *This makes me think…*  Impulsive teens sometimes do risky things, even when they know better. Texting while driving is one example that we hear a lot about. It’s hard to imagine that there is a teen in America who hasn’t heard that it’s dangerous to text while driving. But it’s easy to imagine a teen saying, “Oh, I should text Demetrius to meet us at Pizza Hut,” and then impulsively grabbing her phone while speeding down the road. | *If we do this…*  If we delay the driving age, teens will have a few more years to mature and to develop their abilities to think more logically. Drivers who are thinking clearly would never willfully do something that they know is a bad idea. Too many deaths have occurred when people decided to text and drive. By raising the driving age, we’ll save some teen lives. |

Teens’ Brains Aren’t Ready for Driving

New studies about the way our brains develop show something that most of us have noticed: teens don’t always make good decisions. Why? Scientists say it’s because teens’ brains are still learning how to use logic instead of emotion. Testing decision-making while teens’ brains are being scanned with special imaging equipment shows it’s because of a chemical reaction that occurs when choices are made. They found that teen brains crave the feeling that comes from taking risks.

In light of this new information, we need to revisit laws that relate to teens. One of these is the legal age for driving. Because teens are impulsive, we should change the driving age to 18.

These brain studies show that teens are more easily influenced by friends, desires and emotions than adults are. Amanda Leigh Mascarelli reported the results in *Science News for Students* (<https://student.societyforscience.org>). She explains that this impulsiveness is because of a brain chemical known as dopamine. Dopamine makes us feel good. It is so powerful in teens that they sometimes take big risks. This effect is greatest between ages 13 and 17.

Taking risks is an example of impulsive behavior. Perhaps this research explains why we hear about teen drivers taking chances. Teens are more likely to do things they know that they shouldn’t. Egged on by their friends, they sometimes speed and even drag-race. Drivers who are 18 and older are not as quick to give in to peer pressure because their dopamine levels are lower.

Another effect scientists discovered that relates to driving is that teens don’t always think ahead to consequences because their brains are still developing. It’s important to plan ahead when you’re driving. Teens can get themselves into dangerous situations if they don’t plan ahead. That means checking that there is gas in the tank and money in your pocket, in case of emergencies. Even more dangerous are those spur-of-the-moment decisions that can cost lives.

While my family was lucky, my son did have a close call when he made his first solo trip after getting his license at 16. He was an excellent student and an Eagle Scout, and yet he let impulsiveness cloud his normally good judgment. He was in the far left lane on the expressway. Suddenly he decided he wanted to get off the highway at the exit he was near. He swooped across four lanes of traffic instead of easing over and taking the next exit. He quickly found out what a dangerous stunt this was when a state trooper pulled him over and gave him a ticket. Raising the driving age will give teenagers more time to develop their abilities to plan ahead and avoid negative consequences.

The adolescent brain is in a tug-of-war, says B.J. Casey of Cornell University. It’s logic vs. impulsiveness. “Although teens can make good decisions, ‘in the heat of the moment—even when they know better,’” the ventral stiatum can win.” That’s why impulsive teens sometimes do risky things, even when they know better.

Texting while driving is another example that we hear a lot about. It’s hard to imagine that there is a teen in America who hasn’t heard that it’s dangerous to text while driving. But it’s easy to imagine a teen saying, “Oh, I should text Demetrius to meet us at Pizza Hut,” and then impulsively grabbing her phone while speeding down the road. Impulsive teens sometimes do risky things, even when they know better.

Waiting two more years, when their brains are past this thrill-seeking stage, is not going to be a popular decision. Some will argue that it’s not every teen who gives in to the impulsiveness. The scientific fact, however, is that it is very difficult to resist the reward center of the brain. And when it comes to driving, that’s a terrible chance to take.

Allowing teens to drive before their brains are ready is not worth the danger to themselves. It’s not worth the danger to others. Now that we know the scientific facts, we must change the laws to postpone the driving age until teens’ brains are past this impulsive time in their lives.