**Learning-Focused Lesson**

**Title:** “Drop Outs: What Should We Do?”

### Learning Goals for this Lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACS Standards:</th>
<th>CCRS Reading:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 6th Grade US History: 10 – Analyze changing economic priorities and cycles of economic expansion and contraction for their impact on society since World War II.</td>
<td>• Key Ideas and Details Anchor Standards 1-3</td>
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<td>• 7th Grade Civics: 10 – Describe individual and civic responsibilities of citizens of the US</td>
<td>• Craft and Structure Anchor Standard 6</td>
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<td>• 7th Grade Civics: 12 - Describe how the United States can be improved by individual and group participation in civic and community activities.</td>
<td>• Integration of Knowledge and Ideas Anchor Standards 7 &amp; 8</td>
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<td>• 12th Grade Government: 14 - Describe the role of citizens in American democracy, including the meaning, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship</td>
<td><strong>CCRS Writing:</strong></td>
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<td>• Additional Guidance and Counseling Standards can be applied</td>
<td>• Texts Types and Purposes Anchor Standard 1</td>
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<td>• Production and Distribution of Writing Anchor Standard 4</td>
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<td>• Research to Build and Present Knowledge Anchor Standards 8 &amp; 9</td>
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<td><strong>CCRS Listening &amp; Speaking:</strong></td>
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<td>• Comprehension and Collaboration Anchor Standards 1-3</td>
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<td>• Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas Anchor Standard 4 &amp; 6</td>
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### Students Will Know:
- How do deliberate in a forum
- How to evaluate trade-offs
- The general situation of dropouts in the state of Alabama, along with the consequences that come with dropping out of school
- At least three approaches to solving the issue

### Students Will Be Able To:
- Deliberate in a Alabama Issues Forum
- Respectfully disagree with a peer
- Improve upon Listening, Writing, Reading, and Speaking skills
- Provide and Receive genuine feedback
- Work together as a team to solve a major national issue

### Lesson Essential Questions: “What can we do to prevent kids from dropping out of school?”

### Key Vocabulary: achievement, community, deliberation, dysfunctional families, extracurricular, global competition, graduation, juvenile delinquency, literacy programs, pre-K initiatives, public opinion, public policy, qualitative assessments, remedial programs, social services, trade-offs, truancy

### Lesson Instruction: There are three main phases when teaching deliberation through the lens of an Alabama issue guide: The Research, The Forum, and the Reflection. The teacher’s role for all three phases is to be the facilitator, which requires a certain amount of flexibility to allow the students to
Learning Activity 1: Research (1-3 Days)

- The first phase revolves around researching the issue: What can we do to prevent kids from dropping out of school?
- **Note:** The amount of class time dedicated to researching the issue should be correlated with A) the age of your students and B) how much independent research your students will realistically do for the forum. In general, the more time you can afford to spend researching the issue, the more productive the forum will be.
- **Hook:** Students will watch the documentary *InsideOut* (the DVD can be ordered at [http://www.mattiecostewart.org/insideout](http://www.mattiecostewart.org/insideout)). This documentary is a great way to prime the students' brains with stories of prisoners that have dropped out of high school. Teacher will then lead a class discussion on what the students saw and how dropping out of school impacted the interviewees’ lives.
- **Set the Context:** As a whole class, read “The Dropout Situation in Alabama” on page 4 in the *Dropouts: What Should We Do?* Issue Guide. Next, allow students to come up to the white board/promethean board and write a concern that is expressed in the reading (students should also be allowed to raise their own concerns). Once the students have compiled a comprehensive list of concerns, the teacher will facilitate a discussion to narrow down the list to a couple core issues (eg. Little or no parent support, falling into the wrong crowd of friends, low expectations, or failing school). The “core issues” should then be written in a prominent place in the classroom so that the students and teacher can continue to realign the discussion if it were to get off track.
- **Preview the Approaches:** In small groups, students will read through the three options and complete a graphic organizer, comparing and contrasting the approaches and determining the value of the trade-offs. (See Appendix 1)
- **In-depth Research (Day 2-3):** In optimal circumstances, there would be a 1:1 student-device ratio in which students will be able to spend 1-2 days in class researching the issue, the context, and the possible trade-offs to solutions. Alternative options would be A) to assign the research as homework to be completed by the date of the forum, or B) to print off the additional materials to pass out in class.
- **Assessment:** Graphic Organizers; 3-2-1 strategy can be incorporated at the end of each day of research to capture the most important ideas or concepts that students picked up from the research.

Learning Activity 2: Forum (1 Day)

- The second phase is the actual forum that will take place in your classroom. For more information about how to moderate a forum in your class or community go to [https://www.nifi.org/en/moderators](https://www.nifi.org/en/moderators)
- **Setup:** Desks/chairs should be set up in a circle so the students can see each other (Alternative venues are also an option, such as a school library). The teacher should play the role of the moderator and a student (or second teacher/helper) should play the role of recorder. Teacher will then explain to students how the deliberative process works. Make sure to highlight that students are on equal footing throughout the forum and that the moderator is to remain neutral. Moderator will then review rules and begin the deliberation process. Students must wait to be called on. As students elaborate, the recorder writes the highlights on the white board/promethean board (it would be to your benefit to give your recorder a little preparation so they know what is expected and they are not attempting to write too much or too little). Most importantly, let them know that this is not a debate, but a deliberation – we are all on the same team in search for common ground.
- **Process:** As moderator, teacher will attempt to give equal time to each approach as well as to each voice in the room (likewise, there will always be voices not represented in the room, if you notice a voice that is not represented, challenge your students with pointed questions. ie. Most, if not all, of your students are not parents, what would a parent's perspective on the issue be?). The teacher must remain neutral at all times, posing questions and allowing students to clarify, rather than implying (or explicitly claiming) a "correct answer." All students should be given an
opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas and no individual student should be allowed to dominate the conversation – sometimes this means limiting one student, while intentionally calling on another.

**Assessment:** Students should individually write out answers to open ended reflection questions that evaluate their own participation and how their thoughts changed or didn’t change throughout the deliberation process. An alternative option would be to give them a graphic organizer to complete during and post-forum (Appendix 2)

### Learning Activity 3: Reflection (1 Day)
- The third phase, which is often under-rated, is the reflection component. The forums are almost always too short and go too fast, covering too many thoughts and ideas for a person (even the teacher) to process during the actual forum. For maximum benefit, spend a day reflecting on the research and preconceived notions, the forum itself, as well as how thinking changed from start to finish. Lastly, the teacher should facilitate discussion on common ground, what did most people agree upon (remember it is very rare that 100% of students agree with any one thing, so look for vast majorities, not necessarily unanimous consensus).
- **Personal Reflection:** Students should be given the opportunity to write out their thoughts and ideas about the forum, and then share that with a pair. Finally, the teacher will take a few of those thoughts and ideas and present them to the class (teacher should be bouncing from pair to pair to find a wide variety of answers to be shared to the whole class).
- **Survey:** Students will spend the next ten minutes taking a survey directly correlating to the forum they had completed the day before. These answers will help you as a teacher to improve your craft, but will also give you insight into the thought process of your students. Teacher will then choose a couple key questions from the survey to lead a discussion about the forum and about the process itself.
- **What next?:** In small collaborative groups, students will make a poster (small or big – depending on your supplies) with one suggestion of what the class or individuals could do as a “Next Step” in the democratic process.

**Assessment:** Surveys and Posters.

### Extension Strategy:
In any forum, students should be challenged to take the lessons learned in the forum to the Action Level. The teacher should pose the question: “So... What now?” Where do we go from here? What action steps need to be made to make our school/community a better place? Some ideas take shape around individuals, some around small groups of friends, and still others are whole class projects. Determine ahead of time as to the parameters of the extension, will it be extra credit or mandatory?
Appendix 1

Note to Teacher: Triple Venn-Diagram: To compare and contrast the three major approaches, to highlight the trade-offs, and to visualize the fact that they are all reaching for the same goal.
## Dropouts: What Should We Do?

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<th>Emphasize Achievement</th>
<th>Emphasize Preventative and Corrective School Programs</th>
<th>Emphasize Community Responsibility</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is most important to me about this issue?</td>
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<td>What is most important to me about this issue?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What do I think?</td>
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<td>What did I say?</td>
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<td>What did others say that I agree with? Why?</td>
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**Reflection:**
How did my thinking change as a result of this forum?

Which approach did you think was the best? Why?