

# Social Movements and Philly School Closings Curriculum

## Educators Outside the Classroom ItAG Spring 2013

\*adapted from the University Community Collaborative's POWER Internship 2012-2013

### Ice-breaker (15 Minutes) *Snap Debates!*

#### Process:

- Break the group into 3 groups.
- Explain that two groups will face off against each other; the third group will judge.
- Every time I snap, someone new needs to give an argument.
- NOBODY can speak twice until EVERYBODY on your team has spoken at least once!
- The teams will switch off talking.
- The goal is to PERSUADE the audience that you are correct!

#### Topics:

- What's better, instagram or twitter?  
Apple vs Google?  
North v West Philly  
New York v Philly rap  
Elected school board vs appointed school board  
Should mayor control schools or Superintendent (CEO)?  
Is reality TV "real?"  
Dress codes - yes or no?
- **Do you think 23 public schools should be closed?**

#### *Debrief from debaters:*

- What did your team do well?
- What could your team do better?

#### *Debrief from audience:*

- Who was more persuasive and why?
- What specific things did people do well?

### Introduction/SOUL Activity (25 Minutes) *Parts of a Social Movement*

#### Discussion Questions

- What is a social movement?
- What are examples of social movements that we know?
- What are examples of social movements that have happened recently, or that are happening RIGHT NOW?
  - \*Occupy Wall St.
  - \*Arab Spring
  - \*Hip-hop!
  - \*Anything else?

## Social movement activity: *Philadelphia Student Union (PSU)*

- Watch “The People United”:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JExMxySGIq4&list=UufKGwXle027ErbRM1YxDR7A>
- Draw a car on the whiteboard. Explain that we’re going to look at the components of a social movement based on the parts of a car – headlights, driver, stereo, engine, and wheels.
  - VISION (headlights): What is PSU’s vision? What are their goals? (Think broad – equitable education, good quality public education)
  - PEOPLE (driver): Who is part of PSU?
  - MEDIA/ARTS (stereo): What forms of art/media did you see?
  - WORK (engine): What drives the organization? (You may have to help with this one – they have chapter meetings in multiple schools, and citywide meetings every week)
  - TACTICS (wheels): What tactics did you see?
    - Protest
    - Signs
    - Community Meetings
    - You can show the Zombie Apocalypse if you want (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N6mlr0SSBwM>)
    - What other tactics have you heard of movements using? E.g.:
      - \*Throwing parties, publicizing the movement
      - \*Radio shows
      - \*Sit-ins
      - \*Marches/Rallies
      - \*Teach-ins
      - \*Media!
      - \*Protests
      - \*Town hall meetings
      - \*Anything else?

## Organizing 101 Role-play (50 Minutes)

### Set Up & Process

- Now we’re going to think about how to use some of the tactics, the wheels, that we talked about earlier.
- Break students into 5 groups.
- Read “The Situation” to everyone.
- Give each group their own description. Group 1 is the School District. Groups 2-5 are students from 4 different high schools.
- Send the 4 "student" groups into a separate room.
- Give the School District 7 minutes to decide which schools to close.
- Encourage students to think about what they’ll do if their schools are closed and if they aren’t.

### The Decision

- Ask the School District for their decision. Announce their decision to the other room.
- Ask the students what they are going to do. Tell them that they have 10 more minutes to strategize.
- Warn the School District that students seem to be upset. Tell them that they have 10 minutes to strategize.

### Wrap-up Discussion

- What are you going to do to keep your school open?
- What are you going to do if the District has decided to keep your school open? Are you going to do anything?

## Organizing 101 Role-Play Background & Situations

### The Situation:

The School District of Philadelphia is threatening to close 60 schools this year. They are closing 2 of the 4 schools represented in this room.

### Group 1:

You are the School District. Your group has the superintendent of schools, the mayor, and other elected officials. You need to decide what schools to close.

Schools:	Operating Cost:	# of Students:	Academic Rating:	Safety:	College Bound:
South Philly High	\$8.1 million	701	**	***	***
Benjamin Franklin High	\$6.4 million	605	*	****	***
West Philly High	\$10.7 million	795	*	****	**
Edison High School	\$13.9 million	1400	*	***	**

### Group 2:

You are a group of students at West Philly High. You are anxiously awaiting the decision of the School District about your school. If your school is closed, you will all be split up and sent to different schools. If your school remains open, you may have more students attending your school. Remember that the school district has decided to close 2 of the 4 schools in this room.

**Group 3:**

You are a group of students at Benjamin Franklin High. You are anxiously awaiting the decision of the School District about your school. If your school is closed, you will all be split up and sent to different schools. If your school remains open, you may have more students attending your school. Remember that the school district has decided to close 2 of the 4 schools in this room.

**Group 4:**

You are a group of students at South Philly High. You are anxiously awaiting the decision of the School District about your school. If your school is closed, you will all be split up and sent to different schools. If your school remains open, you may have more students attending your school. Remember that the school district has decided to close 2 of the 4 schools in this room.

**Group 5:**

You are a group of students at Edison High School. You are anxiously awaiting the decision of the School District about your school. If your school is closed, you will all be split up and sent to different schools. If your school remains open, you may have more students attending your school. Remember that the school district has decided to close 2 of the 4 schools in this room.

**What are you going to do to keep your school open?**

**What are you going to do if the District has decided to keep your school open? Are you going to do anything?**

**Extension: Action Steps for Educators and their Students**

To continue civic engagement with students are school closings (and other social issues), educators and students can participate in the following actions:

- Write letters and make phone calls to offices of local and state elected officials advocating for a social justice platform
- Attend an SRC meeting and give a short presentation. Speaking rules available here: <http://webgui.phila.k12.pa.us/offices/s/src/register-to-speak-at-an-src-meeting>
- Attend a Philadelphia Student Union (PSU) Saturday meeting or attend/start a YUC chapter meeting (youth only)
  - \*<http://www.phillystudentunion.org/index.php/get-involved/item/16-saturday-meetings>
  - \*<http://youthunitedforchange.org/>
- Interview current or past Philly education activists and create an oral history podcast
- Listen/Watch media coverage:
  - \* This American Life on Harper High (Chicago) - <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/487/harper-high-school-part-one>
  - \*Our America - <http://www.amazon.com/Our-America-Death-South-Chicago/dp/0671004646>
- Look into the Urban Archives at Temple University for Philly examples
- Film a short reaction video of community members responding to the closings
- Integrate the school closings activities in this packet into a history lesson about civil rights