



The Rights to Education

Lesson Plan: Barriers to Education in a U.S. High School

Grade Level: 9-12



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Lesson Plan: Barriers to Education in a U.S. High School

Goal: Build understanding about barriers to education faced by classmates

Objectives:

- Students will identify the barriers students face in realizing their right to education in U.S. high schools.
- Students will consider the roles of different members of society in guaranteeing a right to an education.
- Students will connect the responsibility of school climate and educational rights to their own behavior.

Essential Question: Is the right to an education extended to all U.S. students?

Resources:

- Handout 1: Kao, ELL Student Experience
- Handout 2: Malory, Student Experience with Excessive Discipline
- Handout 3: Erin, Student Advocate for Those with Disabilities
- Handout 4: Jason, Gay Student Experience
- Handout 5: Bethany, Pregnant Student Experience
- Handout 6: Discussion Questions
- Handout 7: Student Roles

Time Frame: 1-2 class periods

Age Level: High School

Minnesota High School Social Studies Standards

- World History, I, #1: Students will examine human rights principles and how they have been supported and violated in the late 20th century.
- Government and Citizenship, A #4: Students will understand the importance of informed decision making and the roles of public speaking, conducting a public meeting, letter writing, petition signing, negotiation, active listening, conflict resolution and mediation, defending a public policy position in a civil conversation.
- Government and Citizenship, B #2: Students will examine the tensions between the government's dual role of protecting individual rights and promoting the general welfare, the tension between majority rule and minority rights, and analyze the conflict between diversity and unity which is captured in the concept "E Pluribus Unum."
- Government and Citizenship, A #3: Students will know and analyze the points of access and influence people can use to affect elections and public policy decisions.

Warning! Please be aware that some of the stories in this lesson may contain sensitive language and sit



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Procedure:

- 1. Brainstorm.** Have the class generate ideas as to what they think having the right to an education means. Write these down on the board.
- 2. Explain.** Explain to the students that the right to education is guaranteed under numerous United Nations Documents including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Right to education guarantees every child access to quality schools and services without discrimination, including quality teachers and curricula, and safe and welcoming school environments that respect human dignity. There is strong tradition of support for this rights in the United States, as evidenced by the recognition of the right to education in all fifty state constitutions.

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

- *“Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary stages.”
Article 26 (1)*
- *“Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations, racial or religious groups...”
Article 26 (2)*

- 3. Listen.** The students will hear the stories of several high school students, read by other students (see Handouts 1-5). Before they begin reading, emphasize that these are true stories or stories that are based on actual reports and experiences. The readings can be done in several ways.
 - A. Break the class up into 5 groups and give each group one of the monologues to read together, discuss and then summarize for the class.
 - B. Make small groups with 5 students in each group, and give each student a different monologue to read. Have each student read their story aloud to the group and after each one is read, have the group discuss what they found interesting or surprising.
 - C. Ask for 5 volunteers. Give each student who volunteers a different story and have them read it aloud to the class to be discussed as a large group. One suggestion is to assign the parts to volunteers the day before the readings so that they can practice role-playing the character.



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4. Discuss. Discuss the following questions as a class or in small groups: (also see Handout 6)

- What are your reactions to the stories you just heard?
- Review the definitions the class brainstormed on the board. How do these definitions relate to the stories you just heard?
- What barriers to the right to education can you identify from the monologues?
- Do you think that the students' right to an education is being unfairly obstructed? Why or why not?
- What issues within society do you think are responsible for these barriers to education?
- Did any of these stories surprise you? Why or why not?
- Why do you think these problems exist?
- What is our role, as members of the community, in situations like this?
- Do you think any of these barriers exist in our school?
- What changes do you think need to be made within our school to allow everyone to access their right to an education?
- Did reading these stories influence your views on anything related to human rights or the right to an education?
- Has this activity changed the way you think about your high school and the education you receive?

5. Develop Recommendations. Cut *Handout 7: Student Roles* into separate strips and give each student one of the roles. For a large class, have two of each role. Break the students up into small groups according to their roles: students, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members. In their small groups, each student should develop and recommend one key action they could take, to address the barriers to education, that is appropriate to the role assigned to him/her. Have them work together to come up with a list of recommendations that:

- Address the needs of the victims
- Prevent the repetition of future violations

6. Present. Have each group present their recommendations to the class. As a large group discuss the feasibility of the recommendations and what steps could be taken in their own school to improve the right to education for all.



Kao - ELL

Student Experience

High school is usually a hard experience, full of drama and stress. Friendships are formed and broken. Grades and test scores seem like the most important things in the world. My high school memories are a little different than those of most people. I entered ninth grade knowing minimal English - my family and I are Hmong refugees originally from Laos. We had come to the U.S. from a refugee camp in Thailand a few months earlier.

Going to school in an unfamiliar environment and being expected to learn in a foreign language was initially terrifying. I didn't understand when people tried to communicate with me. I was placed in the English Language Learner (ELL) program. I spent about 80% of my time in ELL classes. I was only with non-ELL students for gym and math. I took a mainstream algebra class. The word problems in math involved a lot of reading and the teacher didn't know how to explain in a way so that a non-English speaker could understand. A lot of the time, I was completely lost, left doodling on my notebook as the people around me took copious notes.

The ELL classes we were stuck in did not challenge us and we were repeating the same lessons over and over again. The expectations were low, and the program was not preparing us to enter mainstream classes faster. I usually felt like I was just in glorified study hall. The ELL classes were completely in English. If I was confused, I didn't have anyone to ask because none of the teachers spoke my language. I

learned a little, but the pieces of information didn't help me gain a grasp of the language.

I learned geography terms like "elevation" and "topography," but I still didn't know what to say to the lunch ladies when I didn't want the lunch meat. The ELL teacher wasn't able to help me - the program was poorly staffed and overlooked. We didn't have textbooks to take home and the teacher had to make copies out of the book for everyone. Because of this, we didn't get homework and we learned the same lessons over and over again. The teacher had low expectations, and he didn't know how to handle a large group with varied needs, speaking many languages. Most of the students were unfocused and distracted. There were kids as old as 21 in the group, because the law says that students can be in the ELL program until the age of 21 if they have yet to graduate. A lot of the older students were just discouraged or felt like they weren't learning anything. To graduate, they had to pass a standardized test in English, and a lot of students fail it multiple times. By the end, some of them just were disheartened by the whole system - they didn't graduate and couldn't get jobs that would support their families.

It felt like the district didn't pay attention to the ELL program - our parents couldn't fight for what we needed because they were just learning the ropes of the school system, and we weren't in a position to challenge our teachers. The older students seemed to be completely



Kao - ELL Student Experience

falling through the cracks, and no one noticed or did anything about it. My parents never complained about the problems with the ELL program. Actually they didn't know very much about the U.S. educational system - they were working, adjusting to life in the U.S., and trying to learn English, so they didn't have much time to look into what was happening at school. The school did have Hmong translators to assist when parents met with administrators or teachers. That is helpful but in my culture, parents trust that the school will provide for our educational needs and they do not see it as proper to question the school's authority.

What made it even more frustrating was that I felt alienated from all the other kids. I was lonely, and the only people who seemed to even notice me were the other Hmong students. Most of the ELL students hang out with other kids who speak their same language. The teachers did not make any efforts to help us learn from each other. American students did not even notice us. Actually many of them looked down on us which made the segregation worse. More than anything else, I just wanted friends who I could relate to. It's tough to be "the Hmong kid who doesn't speak English." It really annoyed me that because I couldn't speak English very well, people assumed I was stupid.

Now that I'm a few years out of high school and I'm proficient at both reading and writing English, I can look back on my experiences and really think about how much I learned. I

have come to realize that other students in other ELL programs had great experiences but so much depends on the quality of the teaching staff and the willingness of the school to integrate the mainstream and ELL students. I want to make a difference in the lives of ELL students today and in the future. The fact is the ELL system really didn't teach me or the other students much. We were separated from our other peers and put in classes where we weren't challenged or instructed in a way that encouraged us to understand the language and culture. Hopefully I can help change things by holding school districts accountable for ELL students, which will only happen once districts work to create curriculum and lessons that will work with the needs of different students. Staff and teachers need to be fully qualified and able to adapt lessons and teach in creative ways. Can you believe that only 30% of teachers working with ELL students have any specialized training to do so? Teachers and administrators should maintain high expectations for us, integrate us into the school community and not isolate and label us as "the students who can't learn English."

This story is based on an interview with Ladan Yusuf, Executive Director of Crossing Barriers on July 12, 2007.



Malory - Student Experience With Excessive Discipline

Most kids complain about going to school. It's early in the morning. They just want to sleep; it's boring; the classes are hard; everyone has excuses. My reason for not wanting to go to school is a little different. I blame the police officers and the SSAs, or School Security Agents, the supposed enforcers of safety. They make school feel like a jail and they seem to think that all of the students are hopeless criminals. Every morning kids line up at the entrance of the school, and the line extends out of the doors and onto the front steps. Once we get inside, it feels like an assembly line. There always seems to be one crabby police officer who separates the boys and the girls, and when he's feeling especially annoyed, he'll push around someone who talks too loud or isn't in line properly. Sometimes he'll force someone against the wall and threaten to lock them up if they doesn't "start to behave." None of us like to see that, but we can't do anything. We just look away and keep moving towards the metal detector which blares intermittently. The police eye us angrily and usually search our bags whether they've set off an alarm in the bag screen or not.

Most of us have stopped bringing food or water to school because we know that it'll just get taken away. Cell phones are always a problem too - sometimes they get taken and are never given back. We have to be careful about bringing anything valuable or important, because you never know what will be deemed 'dangerous' by security. They take money, perfume, belts,

jewelry, music players and sometimes even things like cameras.

The worst part of the entire process is the pat down, if you're unlucky enough to set off a metal detector. Sometimes the officers seem to take pleasure in making us feel disgusting and uncomfortable. They make girls lift up their shirts if their bras set off the metal detectors, and a lot of my friends, even some girls, have been ordered to unzip their pants to prove that they aren't hiding anything. It's the worst for the girls - whenever I look over and see some police officer about to wand a girl, it makes me feel sick to my stomach. They don't care who you are or how you feel. They like to have power. When they wand you, it feels like they're looking for an excuse to do something inappropriate. They manhandle all of us like we aren't even real people, and sometimes they'll even make comments about our bodies. Those aren't the only comments they make, and they're certainly not the most offensive. I can't even remember the number of times that I've been sworn at by a police officer.

Teachers are treated almost as badly as students - when the metal detectors were first installed and the SSAs entered the school, the teachers tried to do something. My science teacher was appalled at how we were being treated and took pictures of students being forced through the lines. As soon as the police noticed him, they made him take the film out of his camera and threatened that they would



Malory - Student Experience With Excessive Discipline

handcuff him if he did anything else they didn't like. One teacher protested when she saw a student being handcuffed for taking too long to hand over his cell phone, and she was handcuffed and forced to spend a night in jail. She complained to the police department, and then she received hate mail that warned her not to mess with "fellow officers." It's probably pretty obvious that this makes it hard to learn. The lines for the metal detectors are always long, and if you're less than half an hour early, you'll be late to first period. On bad days, you might miss first period completely. Students who are late to school aren't even allowed through the detectors, and sometimes they have to sit outside for a few hours before a teacher sees them and convinces the officers to let them in. It's tough to concentrate when you know that once you leave class, the officers will be in the hall, ready to pounce at the smallest thing. A good friend of mine was sent to jail for a night for swearing in the hallway, and when he resisted being handcuffed, the SSA officer hit him. It just makes me feel violated to know that they have so much power, and that not even the principal can control them.

It feels like we're at an unfair disadvantage - we have to compete nationally against kids who will never have a police officer frisk them at school. Before the AP Calculus test last year, my class planned to have breakfast together at school. Our teacher was going to provide breakfast, and she told the police officers to let us in early. We all came an hour before we were supposed

to take the test, but the officers refused to let us in. We waited outside for almost an hour, pleading with them, but they just wouldn't. When we were finally allowed to enter, we had to rush through breakfast and run to the test, stressed out and frustrated. That only made the 4 hour test harder than it should have been.

Coming to school shouldn't feel like a trip to prison, but it does, and it will until something changes and the officers start treating us like humans who are at school to learn.

This story is based on an interview with Liz Sullivan, Education Program Director for National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (NESRI) on August 2nd, 2007.



Erin - Student Advocate For Those With Disabilities

When I first signed up for the 'Peer Understanding' class at my school, I thought of it as a class I could do my homework in. The description talked about how students would develop a deeper understanding of themselves and others by working with special education students, but I brushed it off and figured I would have to help someone with a disability read or something like that. I couldn't have been more wrong in my expectations, because I learned more from that class than from any other course I took in high school.

The first day, I was assigned to help the students with severe disabilities with the tasks they were working on. I'd never been in the room that they were in, and I was surprised to see so many students hadn't noticed before. I wouldn't say that I was prejudiced against people with disabilities, and I didn't purposely discriminate against them. My friends and I usually did our own thing and didn't notice them, which was what most everyone did. I didn't think about the disabled students in the same way that I thought about other kids because they usually weren't in my classes and I never had to interact with them. On that first day of class, when a few other students and I were given instructions to "help out," we had no idea what to do. One girl approached a boy in a wheelchair who was sorting different sized puzzle pieces and gave him clues when he got stuck. I tried to follow her example and I sat next to a boy who was struggling to fill glasses with water from the sink. The boy filling the glasses smiled at me and, with some difficulty, said his name was

Ben. I watched him for a while, and then he had to distribute the cups to the other students in the class. I was so surprised to see the various activities that kids were taking part in, and I saw how difficult it seemed for them to do things that I just took for granted. I had always thought that learning at school involved reading and taking notes, but these students were doing completely different things, and that was what was best for them. I'd never considered that some students would need to learn other things or do something besides college after high school.

The next day, I was assigned to go on a walk outside with a group of disabled students, and as we walked across the football fields, we passed classes that were taking advantage of the weather and sitting outside. I became acutely aware of their sideways glances at me and the people I was with, and I noticed that a lot of people didn't even bother to look up as we passed. A few people gave me confused looks, as if to ask what I was doing with a group of special ed students. I tried to smile and remain unaffected, but I realized that the way people were reacting was distinctly different than how they would have if I had been with a group of people without disabilities. What bothered me more was that I realized I might be one of those people who ignored the "special ed kids" without even knowing. I saw a few kids laugh when one of the girls I was with tripped, and their expressions made it clear that they weren't laughing with her. It wasn't like seeing this behavior totally shocked me, but for once, I



Erin - Student Advocate For Those With Disabilities

was with the person who was on the receiving end, and it made me feel terrible.

Over the next few days, I began to understand more than I had ever imagined. I learned that some disabled students were placed in a regular classroom setting so they could have a chance to interact with kids without disabilities and work on their social skills, even if they weren't able to complete all the work. I had earlier dismissed special education students in my classes as distractions, but understanding their needs made me far more sympathetic. I saw how teachers in regular classes disregarded disabled students and treated them differently, not acknowledging them or ever asking their opinion. Some teachers seemed to view them as burdens and they didn't think that a student who wasn't "normal" could contribute anything.

The one thing that made me the most upset was something that I'd seen before, but from a different perspective. I was walking to the art room with a boy named James, and two other boys from our grade approached him. They greeted both of us, and I was initially pleasantly surprised that they weren't just ignoring James. Then they started talking about Sara, a pretty, popular girl who was a year older, and they urged James to ask her out, telling him that she was in love with him. I could immediately tell that they were making fun of him, but I didn't know what to do. I watched helplessly and after they walked away, I asked James if they were his friends. He smiled apprehensively and said, "I think so." It made me so angry to think

of someone taking advantage of a person as sweet as James. I wanted to yell at them and tell them that he wasn't a toy or a game they could just play with.

As I worked with the other kids day after day, I stopped viewing them as people with disabilities and instead as teenagers like me or any of my other friends. They had personalities, senses of humor, likes and dislikes, and these were completely overlooked by most of the other students. I saw how hard the teachers worked, and the program was completely understaffed. There weren't enough teachers to help the students with their tasks and if someone was having a problem, it could take up to a few minutes till a teacher was available to help.

My other friends were surprised when I referred to a girl with a cognitive disability as my friend, and they couldn't understand. I guess I just saw a new perspective. I saw that some teachers treated disabled students like they didn't matter, as if just because they couldn't communicate like everyone else could, they didn't have feelings. I also ended up learning more about myself and I had to question my behavior too. I want to work with disabled students when I get older, and hopefully I can help more people understand.

This story is based interviews with Jodi Peter, Special Educator on August 30th, 2007 and Amy Goetz, Attorney at the School Law Center on August 3rd, 2007.



Jason - Gay Student Experience

I don't think most people understand. When I mention my boyfriend or a guy I think is cute, they initially looked shocked. Then some people get a really fake smile on their face and act different around me. Others look shocked and horrified and then run away as soon as they can think up an excuse. That's how it is with girls, at least. With other guys, I know that if I mention it I'm inviting trouble. If I did bring it up, they would probably get away from me as fast as possible and go tell their friends I was hitting on them.

All that's bearable. People want to have a problem with it, that's their problem. But I can't stand when people think they have the right to harass me. Sometimes it comes from the most unexpected people. Boys who are so nice to everyone are the ones who'll make lewd comments in the locker room or call me 'fag' like it's a nice nickname. The girls who are leaders of half the school's clubs will give me pointed looks in the hallways and remark "That's so gay" whenever they're in my presence. It comes from more people than you would expect. The things that catch me off guard are especially nasty - comments about how I probably have AIDs or when I'm walking somewhere and some kids from school drive by and swerve so their cars come dangerously close to me. It's scary, but what's scarier is that some people think that's ok.

I would have to say that responses from teachers are the most shocking. Teachers are supposed to be supportive role models, people who might expect a lot but who will help you. That's why

it's alarming when someone swears at me and calls me a name in front of a teacher, and the teacher either smirks or pretends not to notice. Sometimes it just makes me feel alone, which is the worst. I'd rather be angry at the school and the other students for making me feel alienated, upset with my parents for asking if I "still like boys." It just feels so lonely, because no one seems to care or understand. My conservative, Catholic grand-parents still ask if I have a girlfriend every Easter and Christmas, and I'm forced to smile and shake my head and say, "Nope, not yet Grandma."

When I was a freshman in high school, a group of seniors tried to start a Gay Straight Alliance, a GSA. The previous year there had been some issues with fights between openly gay students and some students who felt "morally repulsed" by GLBT people. In light of those events, about a dozen students thought it would be good to have a GSA which could provide a safe and open place for gay students and help educate others in the school. The administration was hostile at first, and then the students showed that they had the legal right to organize as a school club. They were able to establish themselves, and there were brightly colored signs announcing GSA meetings posted in the hallways. Most of the signs were tagged with graffiti and the administration made sure to make things as difficult as possible. Every meeting had to be monitored; any information that was distributed had to be approved first. Before anyone could come to a meeting, they had to have permission slips signed by their parents. Apparently these



Jason - Gay Student Experience

rules applied to all groups and clubs, but they were only really enforced for the GSA. After a year of this and a lack of enthusiasm from the students, the founders of the group resigned themselves to their senioritis and that was the end of GSA at my high school.

The fact is that no one wants to be friends with the gay kid. At least most people don't, especially not other guys. Some people will be nice; you can make small talk with them in class. They won't make rude comments about you, even when you're not there, but you aren't really friends. By being friends with 'the gay kid', people open themselves up to being made fun of, and no one wants to do that in high school. Parents can also be ridiculously hostile.

In sophomore year, we did presentations on 'stories of struggle' and we looked at groups of individuals that overcame barriers. I decided to do my presentation on the GLBT rights struggle that started in the 1970s with the Stonewall Riot. The day after I presented, my teacher took me aside during class and told me that he had received an angry phone call from a parent about my presentation. Apparently the parent had found the subject matter to be "inappropriate and sexual." I was confused. Sexual? I'd had a poster board with short descriptions of major obstacles and landmarks in the fight for equal rights for GLBT people. My teacher told me to tell him if any students harassed me, and I appreciated his support, but I was still taken aback. I couldn't believe that a parent would be so angry that their child learned about a minority

group that was being discriminated against.

I think it would help if the school taught about GLBT issues. The issue gets completely overlooked, and it's frustrating. In health, during the sex unit, we were taught that that sex should wait till after marriage. We never mentioned anything about if this was different for GLBT students, and I felt like the class didn't apply to me at all.

I know it sounds like I'm moping. And maybe I am, a little. But when you hear people say derogatory things on a daily basis, hear them whispering, when people treat you like you have something contagious if you get within a foot of them in the hall, it just wears on you. When people you think are friendly to you laugh at jokes other people make and don't say anything when someone makes a rude comment, it's disheartening.

I think most gay teenagers feel like I do. Dropout, suicide and substance abuse rates for GLBT teens are significantly higher than they are for the general population. 28% of gay and lesbian high school students drop out of school because of harassment about their sexual orientation. 26% percent of lesbian and gay students are forced to leave home because their family doesn't agree with their sexual orientation.

This story is based on interviews with Teresa Nelson, an Attorney with the ACLU on July 5th, 2007 and Phil Duran of OutFront Minnesota on August 17th, 2007.



Bethany - Pregnant Student Experience

It's always interesting when people see me for the first time. Sometimes I try to make a prediction about how they'll react. Will the little boy at the grocery store just stand and stare, wide-eyed? Will the smiling woman on the bus talk to me and ask me some questions? It's the worst at school, where I can count on loud whispers, pointed glances, angry glares, stares, and the occasional random person I don't know who will ask me a barrage of questions.

Occasionally it gets to me, especially on days when every part of me seems to hurt and I've gained more weight that I even want to think about. When I've had a hard day and someone points me out to one of their friends in the hallway, I want to scream, "Yes I'm Pregnant! Do you have a problem with that?!" Of course, I don't. I can't, or they'll think I'm crazier than they already think I am.

So many times people have asked me, "Why didn't you get an abortion? Why didn't you just get rid of it and then you could have a normal life?" Even if I try to, I can't explain it to most people. It's something you just feel, and once I felt like that I knew I couldn't get rid of my baby.

School hasn't been easy, in fact, it's been pretty hard. I was always a pretty good student before I got pregnant, and I don't see why anything should change now. But teachers and the administration treat me like I'm stupid now. The guidance counselor even called me

into her office and talked about finding a school that would be more "suitable" for me, preferably a pregnant girls' school. She got my favorite teacher, my math teacher, to talk to me about it and even though I didn't want to, I caved in and went for a tour of the nearest pregnancy school. It was so depressing, I knew I couldn't go there. The classes were at an elementary school level, and their idea of geometry class was cutting squares and triangles from fabric and making quilts from them. Half the girls were gone at doctors appointments or to spend time with their babies, or because they felt sick. I was sure I wanted to stay at my school.

But learning in school has gotten so much harder. Aside from morning sickness and the other things that come with pregnancy, I have to miss school for doctors appointments, and once my eighth month rolls around I'll need to stay home and relax. I know that having a baby is a full time job, and so is being a student, so I'm very lucky to have a family that is willing to help me.

I know that people judge me when they see me. They think, 'She's pregnant - she must really get around.' But I'm just a girl who had a boyfriend for a year who I thought I loved. You know people just like me. I just happened to be the 1% for whom birth control didn't work. But people don't think like that. It's easier for them to judge my character than try to understand. After my boyfriend and I broke up, it was so bad at school that I wanted to transfer to



Bethany - Pregnant Student Experience

another school where I wouldn't have to see the unsympathetic glares of people I'd known since elementary school.

I called other nearby districts to see if I could enroll, but as soon as I told the person on the phone that I was pregnant, their attitude changed. I heard things like, "This is not the school for you...Pregnant schools would be more conducive to your needs...nobody tries to help you, especially here." One counselor said, "It's not going to help you graduate...It's going to be hard to deliver in the middle of the term...It will be harder on you than it will be on the school." One administrator even said that pregnant teens were a "freaky nuisance." When I persisted, I was told "Fine, then you can go, but you should make an intelligent decision." After considering all this, I decided that staying at my school was the best idea, because then I wouldn't have to deal with the stress of transferring to a new school where the staff sounded hostile.

I'm just glad that I'm allowed to come to school - I read about a pregnant girl who was a senior at a Catholic School in Utah whose school didn't let her come to class after she told them she was pregnant. The school claimed it was for "safety reasons" even though her doctor informed the school that she was physically able to attend school through graduation. The school refused to allow her to attend graduation and didn't print her name in the program, despite the fact that their policy stated that pregnancy would not be used as a reason for dismissal.

Some other pregnant teenagers I've met through a program at the local community center have dropped out of high school. The social stigma combined with the physical pain they were feeling and the family stress was too much for them to take. In fact, a third of all parenting or pregnant women in high school drop out.

I understand why they would drop out. I considered it for a while. Think of it this way - do you feel like your homework is hard? What if you had gained 20 extra pounds, your feet and back hurt, your classmates were gossiping about you constantly, you felt nauseous, you knew you would have to deal with a baby soon, AND you had homework? I'm one of the lucky ones - I go to a well funded school with many resources, my teachers are flexible, and I have a supportive family. Once the baby comes we'll all have to deal with a new set of challenges. I want to finish high school and go on to college, but I know it'll be difficult. I never expected this to happen, but now that it is has happened, I just have to deal with it.



Handout 6: Discussion Questions

- What is your reaction to the stories you just heard?
- Review the definitions the class brainstormed on the board. How do these definitions relate to the stories you just heard?
- What barriers to the right to education can you identify from the monologues?
- What issues within society do you think are responsible for these barriers to education?
- Do you think any of these barriers exist in our school?
- Did any of these stories surprise you? Why or why not?
- Why do you think these problems exist?
- What is our role, as members of the community, in situations like this?
- Do you think that the students' right to an education is being unfairly obstructed? Why or why not?
- What changes do you think need to be made within our school to allow everyone to access their right to an education?
- Did reading these stories influence your views on anything related to human rights or the right to an education?
- Has this activity changed the way you think about your high school and the education you receive?



Student Roles

Group 1: Students

As a **STUDENT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE** develop and recommend one key action you can take to address barriers to education and improve the right to education for all.

Group 1: Students

As a **FRIEND OF A STUDENT AFFECTED** develop and recommend one key action you can take to address barriers to education and improve the right to education for all.

Group 2: Teachers

As a **HOMEROOM TEACHER** develop and recommend one key action you can take to address barriers to education and improve the right to education for all.

Group 2: Teachers

As an **ADVISOR FOR A PEER MEDIATION GROUP** develop and recommend one key action you can take to address barriers to education and improve the right to education for all.

Group 3: Administrators

As the **PRINCIPAL OF THE SCHOOL** develop and recommend one key action you can take to address barriers to education and improve the right to education for all.

Group 3: Administrators

As a **COUNSELOR** develop and recommend one key action you can take to address barriers to education and improve the right to education for all.

Group 4: Parents

As a **PARENT OF AN AFFECTED STUDENT** develop and recommend one key action you can take to address barriers to education and improve the right to education for all.

Group 4: Parents

As a **PARENT VOLUNTEER IN THE SCHOOL** develop and recommend one key action you can take to address barriers to education and improve the right to education for all.

Group 5: Community Members

As a **SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER** develop and recommend one key action you can take to address barriers to education and improve the right to education for all.

Group 5: Community Members

As a **CITY COUNCIL MEMBER** develop and recommend one key action you can take to address barriers to education and improve the right to education for all.

Group 1: Students

As a **STUDENT ON THE PEER MEDIATION TEAM** develop and recommend one key action you can take to address barriers to education and improve the right to education for all.

Group 1: Students

As a **POPULAR/INFLUENTIAL STUDENT** develop and recommend one key action you can take to address barriers to education and improve the right to education for all.

Group 2: Teachers

As a **TEACHER IN A CLASS WHERE IS A STUDENT IS EXPERIENCING HARASSMENT** develop and recommend one key action you can take to address barriers to education and improve the right to education for all.

Group 2: Teachers

As a **TEACHER AN AFFECTED STUDENT CONFIDES IN** develop and recommend one key action you can take to address barriers to education and improve the right to education for all.

Group 3: Administrators

As a **SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER** develop and recommend one key action you can take to address barriers to education and improve the right to education for all.

Group 3: Administrators

As an **ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL IN CHARGE OF DISCIPLINE** develop and recommend one key action you can take to address barriers to education and improve the right to education for all.

Group 4: Parents

As a **PARENT OF A STUDENT WHO HAS BEEN DISCIPLINED FOR HARASSMENT OF ANOTHER STUDENT** develop and recommend one key action you can take to address barriers to education and improve the right to education for all.

Group 5: Community Members

As a **REPRESENTATIVE OF AN ORGANIZATION THAT WORKS ON THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION** develop and recommend one key action you can take to address barriers to education and improve the right to education for all.