

Dream of a Nation- Real-World Inquiry

If students have completed the first two lesson modules, then they are very familiar with multiple critical issues facing our nation. Students have also studied solution models that are effecting real change in communities small and large. This lesson module aims to put students on a trajectory towards effecting change in their own classroom, school or local community.

After becoming issue experts and exploring interconnections in *Dream of a Nation*, students will brainstorm their own solutions to problems facing their school or community. Through proposing an initiative and exploring avenues of research students will create a map towards solving issues in their own community. These activities will require access to the Internet.

This lesson module can mark the beginning of an extended project and there are many ways it can be done within the classroom. Unlike previous lesson modules, the length of these activities depends on how much time a teacher is willing to put towards the projects and the level of commitment from the students. A well-planned and researched solution or action can take as little as 2 weeks to as long as a whole semester or year to implement.

The key word in the title of this book is *dream*, that is our goal, to influence students to dream, but going beyond dreaming is doing. The following lesson modules focus on *doing* and require a certain level of commitment from the class. These lesson modules aren't asking students to change the world, they are simply begging the question: Can you make it better? In short, their answers should be "yes." Whether it's making sure all the lights are off in classrooms, reducing lunchroom waste, or reducing paper use, students can make a difference, and that's our goal.

So whether the ideas are big or small, completed individually, in a group or by the entire class, remember it's not just a dream to make the nation a better place, it can be reality.

1. Action Proposal

This activity will guide students through creating proposals that outline their ideas for implementing real-world action strategies that effect change and combat critical issues highlighted in *Dream of a Nation*. The proposals will also prepare students to for Lesson Module IV where their strategies are implemented in the community.

2. Solution Research Guide

This guide will allow students to organize their thoughts and create roadmaps that will help guide their research on a particular issue and solution. Students have already explored issues and solutions and will now start organizing that information and add to it in the following activities.

3. Solution Presentation

If students are implementing their solutions individually, this activity will allow groups to present their proposal and research to the class. This presentation will challenge students to justify their proposed solution with evidence from their research.

The following essays are suggested readings before completing Lesson Module III:

- Citizens Shaping Their World (p. 64)
- The Power of Young People to Change the World (p. 74)
- Focusing on Solutions (p. 132)
- Dreaming the Future Can Create the Future (p. 386)
- Everyone a Changemaker (p. 392)
- Closing: We are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For (p. 408)

1. Action Proposal

Introduction

This activity will help students to organize their thoughts as they propose their own actions or solutions. Using the provided outline, each student group will craft a written proposal that will act as the foundation for their inquiry into real-world organizations, problems and solutions facing their local community. While working in groups, students will begin to brainstorm possible solutions and actions to take in their community that will create needed change. The solution or action will be proposed to the teacher or class so students can begin researching and putting their plans into action.

Procedure

Have students brainstorm possible solutions or actions and answer the following questions in an essay proposal:

Paragraph 1

- Briefly explain the proposed solution or action.
- What issue does the solution confront?
- How does the proposed solution help solve the given issue?
- Describe the anticipated outcome to the solution or action

Paragraph 2

- Where is the solution most effectively executed?
- Describe the steps involved.
- Is it a difficult process to execute?
- How will you measure results?

Paragraph 3

- Describe the advantages of the solution.
- Describe the disadvantages of the solution.
- Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?

Paragraph 4

- Is the issue being solved any other way? If so, how?
- Are there any other groups involved with the issue?
- Does this solution improve or add to the overall resolution of the issue?

Paragraph 5

- What possible roadblocks do you foresee?
- Do you feel you can be successful in executing the solution? Why?
- Why do you feel this is a worthwhile endeavor?

Have students write and turn in essays to be reviewed for the next step in the process.

Subsequent Activities: After the completion of this activity the class can go on multiple directions. Groups can continue to work on the solutions or actions they have proposed in this activity, or the class can choose a single proposed solution or action to take up and implement as a whole class.



2. Solution Research Guide

Introduction

This research guide will enable students to begin researching their desired solutions or actions by taking into account multiple sources, organizations, and current events. It will also help to open more avenues for exploration as students begin to move from brainstorm to action.

The *Solution Research Guide* can be found in the appendices and includes many critical components that will help students to fully explore issues, solution and implementation of their own action.

Procedure

Have the students complete the *Solution Research Guide*, which includes the following sections, this will take multiple class periods and access to the Internet:

- K-N-W-L Chart: A pre-research graphic organizer to get students started. Groups will create three lists: what they know about their topic, what they need to know about their topic, and what they want to know about their topic. At the end of their research they will return to this activity and write a list of what they have learned.
- Keyword Map: An exercise in creating search terms, by creating a bubble chart of topics, subtopics and associated words. Students will have the tools to further their research online.
- Target Audience and Engagement: Any workable solution needs to have a specific audience and general location of impact. This activity will help students to identify these key elements.
- Organization Profiles: As students research their solutions, they will invariably come across other organizations with similar goals, use this activity to profile these organizations and learn from their involvement with an issue.
- Current Events: This activity challenges students to use primary resources to further explore the critical issues highlighted in *Dream of a Nation*. By exploring print and digital magazines and newspapers students will gain further insight into an issue or solution.
- Implementation Strategy Map: Students will use this activity to fully detail how they will implement their solutions.
- Measuring Results: Any solution must have a plan for measuring results. This activity will help students to identify quantifiable variables in order to measure the effectiveness of their solutions in the future.
- Source Organizer: An easy to use organizer to keep track of sources used in the students' research.

3. Solution Presentation

Introduction

Once students have completed their research they will need to present it to the rest of the class. This activity provides students with a clear outline of how to propose their solutions and justify them through their research. The ideas presented are suggestions, be sure to allow students to explore alternative means of presenting their issue, solution and research.

Procedure

After students have completed their research, they can begin working on a way to present it to the class. Regardless of how the material is presented it will need to include the following.

1. Explanation of the issue
2. Examples of the issue having local impact
3. Description of the proposed solution and why it is relevant
4. How the solution will be executed (steps)
5. Who the solution will reach and help
6. Where the solution will have its greatest impact
7. Examples of similar success models (organizations and solutions)
8. A timeline for implementation
9. How success of the solution will be measured
10. What successful execution of the solution will achieve