

History as a Catalyst for Effective Activism: A Project Based Curriculum

By

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Project Summary

The following artifacts are a collection of separate usable pieces that culminate in a curriculum designed to answer the question: How can history be used to teach students effective activism? This curriculum is intended to be taught in an upper level high school U.S. history class (10th-12th grade) in a class size of 20 students. The class length is 60 minutes per day. It is designed as a supplementary curriculum to be taught alongside the school's provided U.S. history curriculum. It is split into three distinct sections, each with their own artifact accessible by clicking the linked text in the descriptions below: (#1) a collection of informational texts, (#2) four lesson plans for linking the texts to effective activist practices and (#3) a lengthy project based portion. The first four weeks (20 days) of school should be completely dedicated to the informational texts, four lesson plans and introduction of the project without interruption. The actual completion of the project is the "supplementary" portion. During project completion the teacher will switch back and forth between this curriculum and the school's offerings. A suggested schedule is imbedded within the PPT/text in pink slides for the teacher's use and meant to be deleted before being presented to students

#1: Informational Powerpoint/Text

While most curriculums focus on breadth for the purposes of covering a large span of time this curriculum zooms in on a historical case study of the labor movement in order to achieve depth of knowledge for students. Included in this [PPT/text](#) is an assembly of historical information that describes the activism involved in the labor movement for the specific purposes of being examined in later evaluations. This set of slides is referred to as the "PPT/text" throughout the curriculum and lesson plans because it is up to the teacher to decide how the information is disseminated. It has been specifically designed to be presented in one of two ways. First, it could be handed out as a "textbook" for students to follow along with and refer to as the teacher presents the content. In this dense form, the students would not need to take notes since all the information is already in front of them to be referred to at any time. Second, the teacher may use the included PPT as a teachers guide and create their own simplified version that cuts down the dense text, then present *that* version to students in a more "note-taking" friendly fashion. Specific information has been coded in bold and blue signifying suggestions of the information that should be included if it were to be simplified for note taking.

Regardless of the presentational mode each teacher uses, the included PPT/text has been designed to include memorable visuals and clear organizational headings to enhance student comprehension. It also includes links to additional videos, articles and primary sources that vary the style and pace of learning. They are signified by a light red underlined text and can be accessed with a simple click. Each "day's" worth of content is meant to last around one full 60 minute class period assuming some content is assigned for homework (either review or reading on their own). The ratio of class reading/presentation and student HW as well as the decision to cut or add content is up to teacher discretion. Included in the text are also a few formative assessment suggestions. These are embedded in the slides and primary sources in the form of questions (sometimes accompanied with suggested answers). These serve as a guideline for comprehension checks but exit tickets are suggested to be created and used daily during the PPT/text portion for a deeper understanding of student comprehension or to break up the pace of instruction. Some brief notes are included for teacher directions in the "speaker notes section"

The first goal of this section is to present a significant case study of activism that is intrinsically relevant to the four elements of efficacy (discussed in section #2), providing students with a foundation of information which will be made actionable in section #2 and #3. This information is meant to leave students with a holistic and detailed view of the labor movement, its activism and its impact. The amalgamation and organizing of content provides a tool for teachers so they do not have to do additional research/organizing/building on their own. The second goal of this section is to preview the skill of evaluating activism. If students are able to critically evaluate activist tactics, they will be able to reveal

ways to be more effective when practicing it themselves. Developing the skill of identifying effective activist practices through evaluation will prepare them to learn about effective elements in section #2 and engage in it themselves in section #3. They are skills that can be applied long after the class is over in the real world.

#2: Effective Elements Lesson Plans

The following [four lesson plans](#) are designed with the specific purpose of making the content in the previous PPT/text portion “actionable” (usable in practical ways) for students by revealing four individual elements of effective activism that will improve their skills in section #3. Each lesson has a set of objectives that are designed to teach students about one of those elements. Those objectives/elements are...

1. Lesson one: Government Intervention
 - a. Students will be able to understand that although government intervention is difficult and imperfect, it is still effective as a target or tool for activists by listening to and taking notes on the Harvard Kennedy Video Panel
 - b. Students will be able to demonstrate the value of targeting government in activist plans by identifying the ways the legislative, judicial and executive branch made a difference during the Labor Movement in the PPT/text
2. Lesson two: Framing
 - a. Students will be able to understand that strategic attention to framing is a critical component of being an effective activist by analyzing framing choices and outcomes in the Women’s Suffrage Movement PPT
 - b. Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of strategies for effective framing by identifying them in in the Labor Movement PPT/Text and evaluating their effectiveness
3. Lesson three: Physical Space
 - a. Students will be able to understand the value that physical spaces have over digital spaces by critiquing comparing the pros and cons of each space in preparation for debate
 - b. Students will be able to support that value with evidence from by annotating and taking notes on Don Mitchel’s and Tristan Harris’ research
 - c. Student will be able to recognize that value by reviewing its prevalence in the Labor Movement PPT/text and juxtaposing it to the inherent flaws of digital activism
4. Lesson four: Organizations
 - a. Students will be able to understand how a social movement’s organizational strength can make or break activist efficacy by listening to the NPR article, describing the organizational failures of the “Occupy Wall Street” movement and predicting their impact
 - b. Students will be able to demonstrate their knowledge of organizational strength by using the Labor Movement PPT/text to describe it’s organizations and evaluating their strengths and weaknesses

All of the lessons have three core components to their structure which achieve the objectives above and create actionable information.

- Presenting students with a new text or source to help demonstrate a core concept of effective activism
- A contextualizing activity/lecture/assessment before or after (or both) the text so the element is clearly communicated to students and they can internalize how that element can be used to make them more effective activists

- An assessment requiring students to revisit their labor movement PPT/text and link their original Labor Movement information to the newly learned element

The text becomes actionable because students are using the PPT's historical content as a way to evaluate/critique activist activity as either effective or not. This is a skill that can be applied to all social movements today to help improve the ability to make change. Further, these lessons become actionable because after practicing their evaluative skills on the historical content, they will apply the newly learned elements during the development of their own plan to make social change in section #3. In short, these lessons bridge the gap between what students learned from history through text and what they will do with that knowledge in the real world.

The following instructions/guidelines serve as one example teachers may use to achieve the objectives above but they are not prescriptive. They include embedded links to necessary assessment and sources as well as suggested time/length stamps. These plans may be adapted, enhanced or applied differently, according to the needs and goals of the teacher and their unique classroom. As long as students are linking the historical content to the four elements of activism, they will be prepared for section #3. Anything in *italics* text is considered an optional suggestion.

#3: Project Based Learning Guide

The final portion is a project based learning experience where students will research, plan and participate in their own forms of activism. The artifact attached is a [guide](#) that outlines every step of the project for both the teacher and students. It includes instructions/tips, schedules and grading criteria for three major assessments to be completed throughout the year. In this project students will apply the lessons of effective activism to the real world, making the previously learned information truly actionable. Here, students learn by doing. Though guidelines are given, the scale and scope of each project is up to student/teacher discretion. There is plenty of flexibility included within the guidelines for students to stretch their wings and let their own interests and strengths guide their work. Every project SHOULD be very different and the whole experience should be very context dependent and adaptable. Teachers must take a reliable guiding role and create facilitations for students as needed. Some suggestions for facilitations include a group-participation/behavior reflection to hold students accountable for teamwork or a coordinating schedule sheet to help groups find time to meet outside of school. All content in the project based portion is subject to adaptation for the teacher's, students, environment and overall needs.

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