

2025 Children's Defense Fund (CDF)
Freedom Schools®

National Day of Social Action

Afternoon Activity Lesson Plans



840 First St. NE, Washington, D.C. 20002, Suite 300
Tel: (202) 628-8787 | Email: freedomschools@childrensdefense.org
Website: www.childrensdefense.org

2025 Children's Defense Fund (CDF)
Freedom Schools®
National Day of Social Action
Afternoon Activity Lesson Plans

Table of Contents

Resource Overview.....	3
Level I Lesson Plans.....	4-9
Day One.....	4
Day Two.....	7
Level II Lesson Plans.....	10-28
Day One.....	10
Day Two (Multiple Activity Options).....	14
Level III Lesson Plans.....	29-42
Day One.....	29
Day Two (Multiple Activity Options).....	35
Level IV Lesson Plans.....	43-50
Day One.....	43
Day Two.....	48
2025 NDSA Toolkit QR Code.....	51
Acknowledgments and Writers.....	52

Resource Overview

Each year Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) Freedom Schools® partners participate in the National Day of Social Action (NDSA) project—a collective organizing effort centered around CDF’s mission to build community so young people grow up with dignity, hope, and joy.

This year’s NDSA will happen on Wednesday, July 23, 2025. NDSA will focus on the Children’s Defense Fund’s Education for Civic Life and Work policy agenda item. This agenda item reflects our belief that education is a building block for civic life and work, and has a major impact on our children and youth’s ability to flourish.

Public education remains one of the most powerful tools for social mobility and civic engagement. Investing in public education ensures that every child, regardless of their background, can thrive.

This resource has been created to by Ella Baker Trainers (EBT) with the support of *CDF Freedom Schools* national staff to help *CDF Freedom Schools* communities and allies teach K-12 scholars and their families about this history of public education so they can form informed opinions on the matter. The lessons allow scholars to explore complex issues, develop opinions, and utilize different forms of advocacy to let their opinions be heard. Lessons are meant to take place over the course of two days, and range in length from 45 minutes and 120 minutes depending on the subject matter and level targeted.

On NDSA, scholars will use the skills they have learned, or sharpened, and the materials they created to engage community members, school board members, school administrators, and other elected officials with a say in public education in a discussion around public education and its role in our democracy. By teaching and nurturing K-12 scholars as they speak to the GOOD in publication, and the investments needed to make it great, we know our scholars will be well prepared to participate in public forums related to the future of their learning.

Glossary for allies utilizing this resource who are not affiliated with a CDF Freedom Schools site:

Level: *CDF Freedom Schools* offers four different grade brackets to support targeted learning efforts. See individual level for information on corresponding grades.

Scholar: K-12 student.

Servant Leader Intern (SLI): College-aged youth or other adult facilitating the lesson.

Ella Baker Trainers (EBT): Adults who train others in the *CDF Freedom Schools* curriculum and pedagogy. In their professional lives outside of *CDF Freedom Schools*, EBTs serve as educators, administrators, public policy support staff, counselors, learning specialists, entrepreneurs, organizers, and much more.

Level I Scholars (K-2nd Grade)

Day One

Daily Exploration: What makes public school a public good, and is education a right or a privilege?

Total Time: 90 minutes

Common Core Standards:

- RI.2.3. Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text.
- W.2.2. Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.

Lesson Objectives: Scholars should be able to:

- Understand the historical development of public education in the United States.
- Define and differentiate between complex definitions.
- Apply new knowledge to real-world scenarios to evaluate current status of public education.

Materials: whiteboard or chart paper/markers/projector or smartboard with speakers/ internet access/printed or digital signs/writing paper/pencils/colored pencils/crayons/markers

The Set-Up: Use the instructions below to set up the space for your afternoon activity.

1. Servant Leader Interns should create signs with the following definitions and hang them in the space:

Right: Something people are legally or morally entitled to simply because they are human.

Privilege: A special benefit or advantage that is given to some people but not guaranteed to everyone.

Public Education: Free school open to everyone.

Equity vs. Equality: Equality = everyone gets the same. Equity = everyone gets what they need

Access: Being able to actually use or participate in something.

Public Good: Resources every member of the public can consume freely without worrying about their use reducing availability for others.

Private Good: Members of the public can be prevented from using them if

they do not pay or if someone else using it reduces its availability

2. Servant Leader Interns (SLIs) should print or plan to display photos of the following objects: school lunches, textbooks, nurse's office, teacher, chairs and desks or tables, school library, classroom, book fair, uniforms, after-school club or enrichment activity.

The Lesson: Use the following activities to help accomplish lesson objectives.

Opening Activity (15 Minutes): Ask scholars to share what they know about the history of public education. Then, have them watch video on the topic. After watching, scholars should reflect on the new information shared.

Part One (15 minutes): Read the posters to scholars with definitions shown in "The Set-Up" section. Then ask them if they believe access to education should be a right or a privilege and why.

Then move the "Right" and "Privilege" signs to opposites sides of the room and instruct scholars to move to the side of the room they feel best describes the items you will read aloud. For example, if a scholar feels have access to clean water *should be a right*, they should move to the correct side of the room. Invite 2-3 scholars per round to share their rationale.

Items:

- Having access to clean water.
- Playing in a public park.
- Having a tablet or computer.
- Getting dessert.
- Using a public library.
- Going to a museum.
- Going to school.

Then, show scholars pictures of pre-selected items and have them reflect on whether the items are free or not free for the scholars who receive or benefit from them.

Ask the following discussion questions:

- What do we get at school that we do not pay for directly?
- What if school did not provide these things?
- Who should pay for education: individual families or all members of the community through taxes? Why? How does education benefit all community members?

Part Three (15 minutes): Have scholars watch a read aloud of the book *All Are*

Welcome by Alexandra Penfold on YouTube. After the video concludes engage scholars in the following discussion questions:

- How did the characters feel about going to school? Compare this to your own feelings about school.
- Which character was most relatable and why?
- What message did the book give about school and community? Explain.
- Based on the message, should access to public education be a right or a privilege?

Part Four (30 minutes): Discuss what it means to be an advocate and how advocates and activists have played a role in shaping education history. Then, have scholars share the things they love about their school that they believe should be protected or expanded and made available for all children. Explain that these ideas can be considered “advocacy topics”.

Break scholars into small groups to create self-portraits to represent a reflection of their experience with public education. Artwork should include designs sharing:

- A message about what they love about public education.
- What they think all young people should have access to as a part of public education.
- What they want to be when they grow up and what investment is needed in order to help them get there. *See toolkit section on “Art as a Form of Protest” for further details and examples.*

Consider going over a redacted list of topics for scholars to decide a topic based on pages 11-13 of the NDSA toolkit.

Closing Activity (15 minutes): Have scholars share their artwork and the messages they want adults in decision-making roles to know about their public education experience. As a site, invite school board members, elected officials, school administrators, parents, and other community members to join you for a gallery walk to dive deeper into scholars’ artwork and calls to action on NDSA.

Level I Scholars (K-2nd Grade)

Day Two

Daily Exploration: Advocating for strong, fair, accessible public education

Total Time: 120 minutes

Common Core Standards:

- SL.2.2. Recount or describe key ideas or details from a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.
- W.2.2. Write informative/explanatory texts in which they introduce a topic, use facts and definitions to develop points, and provide a concluding statement or section.

Lesson Objectives: Scholars should be able to:

- Understand real-world challenges faced by public schools.
- Create visual and written work appealing to ethos, logos, and pathos.

Materials: whiteboard or chart paper/writing paper/construction paper/butcher paper/markers/colored pencils/crayons/projector for video/computers and internet access

The Set-Up: Use the instructions below to set up the space for your afternoon activity.

1. Servant Leader Interns should print pages 2 and 11-13 from the NDSA toolkit.
2. Servant Leader Interns should print Opinion Articles written by children and published by *Time for Kids* ahead of this lesson. Articles and responses can be found at <https://www.timeforkids.com/g56/sections/opinion/>

The Lesson: Use the following activities to help accomplish lesson objectives.

Opening Activity (15 Minutes): Review what scholars learned the previous day before asking “if public education is a right, what happens when it is not supported?” Write “lunch insecurity”, “lack of books and supplies”, “outdated or limited technology”, “underfunded programs”, “teacher shortages”, and add to the list as scholars are able to contribute. Have scholars raise their hand for all of the issues present at the school they attend. Allow 1-2 scholars to speak to their experience. Then have scholars vote on one advocacy topic they would like to focus on for NDSA.

Part One (15 minutes): Have scholars share what they know about the words “advocate” and “advocacy”. Then present them with the following definitions on the board:

Advocacy is any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others.

An advocate is someone who speaks out for something they believe in that will benefit themselves or others.

Watch “Part of Something’ Full Song” by Nick Music on YouTube. After watching, have scholars reflect on how the characters were advocates or participated in advocacy, or share times they were advocates or participated in advocacy.

While scholars are completing “Part One” some SLIs should be creating the advocacy banners, with one featuring a slogan representative of the advocacy topic scholars selected and the other featuring the NDSA slogan “Public Education is a Public GOOD”. Use bubble letters for both banners.

Part Two (40 minutes): Assign pairs of scholars to a letter to decorate individual letters of each banner, drawing pictures, symbols, writing in facts featured on page 2 of the NDSA toolkit, or coloring. Encourage creativity and collaboration!

Part Three (40 minutes): Explain what Op-Eds are to scholars, definition found on page 9 of the NDSA toolkit. As a group, read examples of Op-Eds from *Time for Kids*. Then place scholars into small groups and distribute Op-Ed anchor charts on paper by drawing or typing and printing copies ahead of the lesson. Each small group should respond to their question and offer two reasons that support their statement.

Charts below:

Opinion: Why does public education matter?	
Reason #1 and Example	
Reason #2 and Example	

Opinion: What would our community look like if public education went away?	
Reason #1 and Example	

Reason #2 and Example	
-----------------------	--

Opinion: Why should all young people have access to the item listed in our advocacy issue?	
Reason #1 and Example	
Reason #2 and Example	

Opinion: Should access to equitable education be a right or a privilege?	
Reason #1 and Example	
Reason #2 and Example	

Groups can overlap topics, but make sure each topic is covered by at least one group. When all groups are finished, put it together for a final Op-Ed. Decide which local and national magazines and newspapers you will send the final Op-Ed to.

Closing Activity (10 minutes): Reflect on the history of public education and why advocacy is important. Then have scholars create invitations that can be sent to decision-makers who decide how to fund public education, what programs to offer, what curriculum to offer, and other similar information inviting them to join scholars and *CDF Freedom Schools* community members in listening to, supporting, and responding to scholars' needs on NDSA.

Level II Scholars (3rd-5th Grade)

Day One

Daily Exploration: Who Was School Built For?

Total Time: 60 minutes

Common Core Standards:

- RI.3-5.3 Explain relationships between events in a historical text.
- SL.3-5.1 Engage in collaborative discussions.
- W.3-5.3 Write narratives or personal responses based on real events.
- L.3-5.4 Determine meaning of words and phrases in context.

Lesson Objectives: Scholars should be able to:

- Understand the purpose of public education, who has had access, and how the system and access levels have evolved.
- Define and give examples of public goods.
- Articulate why public school should be protected as a shared community right and creatively advocate from keeping the system public and equitable.
- Reflect on their role in continuing the fight for educational access.
- Engage in a collaborative gallery walk to explore equity and justice in public schools.

Materials: poster board/chart paper/sticky notes/ markers/research resources

The Set-Up: Use the instructions below to set up the space for your afternoon activity.

1. Servant Leader Interns should create signs with the following definitions and hang them in the space:

Public Education: Free school open to everyone.

Equity vs. Equality: Equality = everyone gets the same. Equity = everyone gets what they need

Access: Being able to actually use or participate in something.

Public Good: Resources every member of the public can consume freely without worrying about their use reducing availability for others.

Private Good: Members of the public can be prevented from using them if they do not pay or if someone else using it reduces its availability.

2. SLIs should use the timeline of education history (shown on the following page) to expose scholars to pivotal points in the history of education in the U.S. Write events from the timeline on individual sheets of chart paper for scholars to investigate during the main activity.

Education History Timeline Stops:

1600s – Education for the Wealthy Only

In the early colonies, schools were mainly for white boys from rich families. Girls, Black children, and Native youth were left out.

Source: National Museum of American History

1647 – Deluder Satan Act

This law requires parents (or masters of apprentices) to provide their children with a basic education in literacy and numeracy. If a child is not taught properly, the government has the authority to put them in a home that will give them a proper education.

Source: National Museum of American History

1830–Common Schools

Horace Mann wanted to establish free, publicly funded education for all children, regardless of their social class or background. Advocates like Horace Mann believed this would create a more educated, moral, and productive citizenry, ultimately strengthening the nation.

Source: [Department of Education](#)

1896 – Plessy v. Ferguson: “Separate but Equal”

This law allowed schools to stay segregated. Black children went to schools with fewer books and supplies.

Source: Library of Congress

1945 –Citizenship Schools

This law allowed schools to stay segregated. Black children went to schools with fewer books and supplies.

Source: Library of Congress

1954 – Brown v. Board: Segregation is Unfair

This Supreme Court case made it illegal to separate scholars by race. But many schools today are still unequal.

Source: National Archives; NAACP Legal Defense Fund

1964 –Mississippi Freedom Summer

Alternative schools, particularly prominent during the Civil Rights Movement, that provided education and empowerment to Black children and adults,

especially in the South, where systemic inequality limited their access to quality education.

Source: [National Archives](#)

1971 – Rodriguez V. San Antonio ISD

Schools can be funded by property taxes despite the funding gaps because there is no fundamental right to education listed in the Constitution. Justices concluded that the Equal Protection Clause of the 14th Amendment does not require absolute equality or precisely equal advantages.

1982 – Plyler v. Doe

A state cannot prevent children of undocumented immigrants from attending public school unless a substantial state interest is involved.

Source: [Justia](#)

2001 – No Child Left Behind Act

This law used testing to try and improve learning. But many underfunded schools were punished instead of helped.

Source: *U.S. Department of Education; NEA*

2020s – Today’s Public School Challenges

Scholars and educators are fighting for fully funded schools. Some schools have laptops and music. While, others don’t have enough resources or books. Scholars are still fighting for fairness.

Source: *Learning Policy Institute; NCES*

3. Prepare index cards with examples of simplified public vs. private goods. Add one good per card. Examples below:

Public Goods	Private Goods
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School library• Playground• Cafeteria tables• Drinking fountain• School nurse• Classroom whiteboard• Art supplies (shared in class)• School bus• Computer lab• Principal’s office• Fire alarm system• School counselor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student lunchbox• Teacher’s personal laptop• A student’s backpack• A parent’s car• Store-bought school supplies• School vending machine (if run by a private company)• Private tutoring lessons• A student’s cell phone• School uniform (purchased by family)

The Lesson: Use the following activities to help accomplish lesson objectives.

Opening Activity (10 Minutes): Ask scholars explain the difference between public vs. private spaces. Scholars should share some examples of spaces and amenities that are public vs. private. Use three to four examples scholars can relate to (e.g., public parks vs. amusement parks).

Part One (20 minutes): Divide scholars into groups of 3-10 and have groups rotate through the posters, spending 1-2 minutes at most posters. It is okay if scholars do not get through each poster. At each stop, groups should discuss who had access to school during this time and whether the access level was just or unjust. Scholars should also use sticky notes to leave responses or reflections on each poster.

Servant Leader Interns should be stationed between posters to: help scholars read and digest information; guide discussions and conversations; and encourage the use of vocabulary words like equity, access, fairness, public.

Part One Reflection (10 minutes): Have scholars pause at their final poster and sit or stand to reflect on the activity. Scholars should share responses to the following discussion questions:

1. Share something you learned that made you think differently about school.
2. What surprised you about who had access to school?
3. Why is it important to learn the history of public education?

Part Two (15 minutes): **Servant Leader Intern should distribute the public and private good notecards among groups.** Have scholars continue to work into their small groups to discuss the difference between public and private goods. Then, groups should work together to sort the public and private good notecards into their appropriate category. Allow each group to share a few of their examples and their rationale for why it is a public vs. private good.

Closing Activity (5 minutes): Share that some things belong to everyone and help us all learn, grow, and stay safe. These are called public goods. Other things are private—just for you or your family. Knowing the difference helps us understand how our community works and why we all have a role in taking care of shared spaces.

Day Two

Note: *There are many different Day Two lesson plans to select from. Select the (one) lesson plan that best compliments your site's NDSA plans. Your site can use more lesson plans but will need to build in additional time or days.*

OPTION ONE: "We Speak Up" Skits and Poster Design

Ideal for groups planning to host protests, rallies, or marches.

Daily Exploration: Protecting the good in public education.

Total Time: 60 minutes

Common Core Standards:

- SL.3-5.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade-level topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- SL.3-5.4. Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.
- W.3-5.1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
- W.3-5.8. Recall relevant information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information.

Lesson Objective: Scholars should be able to creatively express and articulate clear opinions on complex issues.

Materials: index cards/poster paper/markers/colored pencils/crayons

The Set-Up: Use the instructions below to set up the space for your afternoon activity.

1. Servant Leader Interns should write scenarios on index cards listing school-based advocacy issues. Potential ideas include:
 - The school library has no books by Black or Brown authors and illustrators.
 - Their class sizes are too big so it is hard to learn.
 - School lunch is served cold every day.
 - The school cut music and art classes out of its programming.
 - The school does not offer field trips.
 - Some friends stopped coming to school because of fear of ICE.

Servant Leader Interns can create other scenarios based on local advocacy

topics found on pages 11-13 of the NDSA toolkit.

The Lesson: Use the following activities to help accomplish lesson objectives.

Opening Activity (15 Minutes): Invite scholars to share the most memorable fact or idea from the previous day's learning. Then have scholars share their understanding of public goods, the right to a high-quality education, and whether access to high-quality privilege is currently a right or a privilege. Discuss what it means to be an advocate and how advocates and activists have played a role in shaping education history so far. *Consider keeping some of the posters with court cases from the previous day to help guide the conversation.*

Then, have scholars share the things they love about their school that they believe should be protected or expanded and made available for all children. Explain that these ideas can be considered "advocacy topics".

Lastly, scholars should share what it means to speak up for themselves or others and why it is important to do so, especially when it comes to public education. Scholars should share the ways in which they can be leaders now, despite their age or situation.

Part One (35 minutes): Break scholars into small groups (3-4 scholars each). Give each group a scenario card. Each group should come up with a skit featuring a scholar planning to give public comment or testimony at a school board meeting or public event. Scholars can decide the roles they want to play, from an encouraging friend to supportive teacher or mentor, or any role they feel is important to support a young person advocating in a public setting.

Scholars should also make posters related to the advocacy topic to hold up during their skits as their peer(s) speaks to show. Example poster slogans that compliment topics shared in "The Set-Up" section might include:

- See Yourself on the Shelf! or Books For All!
- Smaller Classes, Bigger Futures!
- Keep It Hot, We'll Learn a Lot!
- Where Words Fail, Art and Music Speak. or Art is Not Extra!
- Let Us Learn Beyond the Desk!
- Safe Schools for Every Student, Every Day.
- Our Voices Matter!

Reserve 15 minutes within this time block for scholars to share their skits. If your site has a lot of scholars, consider utilizing different breakout rooms so that multiple skits can be performed at once for smaller audiences rather than having one large audience.

Part One Reflection (10 minutes): Gather full group together and allow a few scholars to respond to 2 of the following discussion questions:

1. How did skits and posters help us become better leaders or problem solvers?
2. Why is it important to speak up when something is not right or unfair?
3. Why do adults need to hear from scholars about public education?
4. What can happen if our scholars, families, Servant Leader Interns, and full *CDF Freedom Schools* community works together to speak out during NDSA?

Wrap the activity by hosting a mini march or chant as scholars hold up posters and walk around programming site or through hallways.

OPTION TWO: “Our School, Our Voices!” Rally, Chant, and Drum Circle

Ideal for groups planning to host protests, rallies, or marches.

Daily Exploration: Protecting the good in public education.

Total Time: 60 minutes

Common Core Standards:

- SL.3-5.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade-level topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- SL.3-5.4. Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.
- W.3-5.1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
- W.3-5.8. Recall relevant information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information.

Lesson Objectives: Scholars should be able to:

- Formulate, identify, and articulate personal opinions on complex issues.
- Work collaboratively in teams to creatively write age-appropriate advocacy pieces.
- Develop and utilize public speaking skills.

Materials: chart paper or whiteboards/markers/drums/buckets/packing tape/drumsticks/duct tape/poster board

The Set-Up: Use the instructions below to set up the space for your afternoon activity.

1. Servant Leader Interns should consider preparing the following items ahead of the lesson:
 - List of advocacy slogans to get scholars creativity flowing. See *Activity 1 in “Speak-Up Skits and Poster Design”* for ideas.
 - Pre-make bucket drums using buckets and packing tape. Allow scholars to decorate during the activity.
 - Pre-make megaphones with poster paper and duct tape. Allow scholars to decorate during the activity.

Servant Leader Interns can create other scenarios based on local advocacy topics found on pages 11-13 of the NDSA toolkit.

The Lesson: Use the following activities to help accomplish lesson objectives.

Opening Activity (10 Minutes): Invite scholars to share the most memorable fact or idea from the previous day's learning. Then have scholars share their understanding of public goods, the right to a high-quality education, and whether access to high-quality privilege is currently a right or a privilege. Discuss what it means to be an advocate and how advocates and activists have played a role in shaping education history so far. *Consider keeping some of the posters with court cases from the previous day to help guide the conversation.*

Then, have scholars share the things they love about their school that they believe should be protected or expanded and made available for all children. Explain that these ideas can be considered "advocacy topics".

Part One (20 minutes): Create call and response cheers and chants. Begin by modeling a call and response for scholars where you say the chant and they echo it back to you.

You: "There's no school like Freedom Schools!"
Scholars: "There's no school like Freedom Schools!"
You: "Reading books is really cool."
Scholars: "Reading books is really cool."
You: "Gaining knowledge through the words."
Scholars: "Gaining knowledge through the words."
You: "I'm down with Freedom Schools haven't you heard?"
Scholars: "I'm down with Freedom Schools haven't you heard?"
You: "I'm down."
Scholars: "I'm down."
You: "Are you down?"
Scholars: "Are you down?"
You: "I'm down."
Scholars: "I'm down."
You: "Are you down?"
Scholars: "Are you down?"

After completing the chant, break scholars into small groups to create new chants based on public education advocacy topics (see pages 11-13 of the NDSA toolkit for topic ideas). Here are some phrases to help scholars get started:

- Books we need, let us read!
- We are strong, we belong!
- Music, dance, let us shine — public school, it's our time!
- See Yourself on the Shelf!
- Smaller Classes, Bigger Futures!
- Keep It Hot, We'll Learn a Lot!

Part Two (15 minutes): Use chart paper to make signs, buckets and packing tape to

make drums, poster paper and duct tape to make megaphones. Decorate materials with markers. Alternatively, use this time to create clapping, stomping, or body percussion rhythms to compliment the chants.

Part Three (10 minutes): Host a mini march and rhythm walk. Scholars line up and march around the site, playground, or through the halls taking turns calling out their chants and rhymes.

2. How did skits and posters help us become better leaders or problem solvers?
3. Why is it important to speak up when something is not right or unfair?
4. Why do adults need to hear from scholars about public education?
5. What can happen if our scholars, families, Servant Leader Interns, and full *CDF Freedom Schools* community works together to speak out during NDSA?

Closing Activity (5 minutes): Cool down and reflect on the activity allowing a few scholars to share response to the following discussion questions:

1. How did it feel to speak up as a collective?
2. Adults make the funding decisions and decide what programs and classes your school offers. What is one thing you would like to tell adults making decisions about your school?
3. How can chanting and marching help people listen to your ideas?
4. Which chant would you share with your principal and why?

OPTION THREE: Bubble Art as a Form of Protest

Ideal for groups doing “Art as a Form of Protest” NDSA Activity

Daily Exploration: Naming the good in public education and the investments needed.

Total Time: 120 minutes

Common Core Standards:

- SL.3-5.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade-level topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- SL.3-5.4. Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.
- W.3-5.1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
- W.3-5.8. Recall relevant information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information.

Lesson Objectives: Scholars should be able to creatively express and articulate clear opinions on complex issues.

Materials: poster paper or cardboard/newspaper or magazine clippings/construction paper or cardstock/11x17 construction paper/butcher paper or bulletin boards/poster paper/markers/crayons/glue/tape/push pins/scissors

The Set-Up: Use the instructions below to set up the space for your afternoon activity.

1. Servant Leader Interns should cut differently sized circles out of colorful construction paper or cardstock. Have butcher paper ready or bulletin boards.
2. Servant Leader Interns should take a photo of each scholar and print it out ahead of the lesson. Alternatively, Servant Leader Interns should ask for families to send a photo of their scholar *ahead* of today’s activity and should ensure all photos have been collected (or taken for scholars whose families cannot send one) and organized ahead of this activity. Have poster paper or 11x17 construction paper ready.

The Lesson: Use the following activities to help accomplish lesson objectives.

Opening Activity (10 Minutes): Invite scholars to share the most memorable fact or idea from the previous day's learning. Then have scholars share their understanding of public goods, the right to a high-quality education, and whether access to high-quality privilege is currently a right or a privilege. Discuss what it means to be an advocate and how advocates and activists have played a role in shaping education history so far. *Consider keeping some of the posters with court cases from the previous day to help guide the conversation.*

Part One (20 minutes): Distribute construction paper circles of varying sizes and shapes to scholars. Each circle represents a "thought bubble". Have scholars share the things they love about their school that they believe should be protected or expanded and made available for all children. Explain that these ideas can be considered "advocacy topics". Scholars should write their advocacy topics, one per thought bubble, in each piece of construction paper they receive. Topics to consider: green spaces; well-lit classrooms and facilities with windows; access to art and music classes; school libraries with a librarian; schools safe for children regardless of migrant status; curriculum featuring lessons about people who look like and experience similar things to them; nutritious and delicious meals; computer labs; restorative justice; etc. *SLIs can tailor this list of examples based on full list of advocacy topics shown on pages 11-13 of the NDSA Toolkit.*

Part One Reflection (10 minutes): Introduce the idea that their voices and experiences matter, and that sharing what they want is a form of advocacy. Explain that dreaming out loud is powerful, and visual storytelling is an advocacy tool. Then ask scholars one or more of the following discussion questions:

1. What makes a school feel like a place where you belong?
2. What are some things in your current school that help you learn or feel safe? What could be better?
3. If you could talk to the school principal or a city leader, what would you want them to know about your dream school? Name investments made to get to your dream school.
4. Why is it important for schools to reflect the cultures and identities of the scholars who go there?
5. How does sharing your vision for a better school help make change?
6. What would happen if scholars never shared their ideas or spoke up?

Note: While scholars are reflecting on the activity, some SLIs should put all the scholars' bubbles together to form a mural on a piece of butcher paper or bulletin boards.

Part Two (10 minutes): Have scholars participate in a gallery walk to view their mural and see all the things that are good in public education. As they walk, they should consider what ideas need protection or expansion to take their own public education experience from good to great.

Part Two Reflection (10 minutes): Invite scholars to share what ideas stood out to them and how we can work together to uplift the good in public education. Scholars should share what they would share with a principal, mayor, or school board member. Explain that for NDSA they will be doing a similar activity and should be prepared to share their opinions with adults in the community ranging from parents to elected officials.

Part Three (30 minutes): Have scholars consider what their school and community would be like if they did not have access to public education. How would things be different if public education disappeared?

Then, have scholars create collages and vision boards representative of their dream for public education and the advocacy topics they believe should be protected or expanded.

They should put a picture of themselves at the center of the collage or vision board to tie their art and ideas to who they are as a person. Advocacy topics can be reflective of their original ideas or of ideas they saw during the gallery walk. Scholars should use markers, crayons, newspaper and magazine clippings, tape, glue, poster paper or 11x17 construction paper, and other craft supplies. Encourage them to include words like “safe”, “fun”, “public good”, “strong”, “our right”, and “fair” in their artwork.

Part Four (25 minutes): Allow scholars 5-10 minutes to hang their vision boards and collages around the room. Then split into small groups. Allow scholars to share their art and its meaning with the members of their group. Group members should role play the role of adults (i.e. parents, school board members, principals, teachers, etc.) and pose questions and statements that challenge the artists’ visions and opinions. Artists should rebut arguments with their own facts, opinions, and experiences.

Closing Activity (5 minutes): Explain that during NDSA, scholars will be showing their artwork and advocacy topics to members of the community including elected officials, school board members, parents, teachers, administrators, and others. Inform them that their opinions matter and their voices are important, and they should continue to practice advocating for the topics they selected so they are prepared to demand the adults support their advocacy topics beyond NDSA.

OPTION FOUR: “What We Need in Our Schools” Op-Ed Brainstorm and Writing Jam

Ideal prep activity for groups planning to write op-eds on NDSA.

Daily Exploration: Naming the good in public education and the investments needed.

Total Time: 90 minutes

Common Core Standards:

- SL.3-5.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on grade-level topics and texts, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- W.3-5.1. Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.
- W.3-5.8. Recall relevant information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take notes and categorize information.
- W.5.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly.

Lesson Objectives: Scholars should be able to:

- Identify and research real-world problems.
- Write cohesive explanatory text expressing clear solutions to complex issues.

Materials: chart paper/writing paper/pens/pencils/markers

The Set-Up: Use the instructions below to set up the space for your afternoon activity.

1. Servant Leader Interns set up 4 “advocacy stations” around the room. Advocacy stations should include: chart paper with one of the messages below; sticky notes; pens, markers, or pencils to write with; Pages 11-13 of the 2025 NDSA Toolkit.

Advocacy Station Questions for Chart Paper:

- What is your favorite class or subject in school and why? How would it make you feel about school if they did not offer that class or teach that subject anymore?
- What do you want to be when you grow up? Which teacher, class, or subject in school helps you learn more about or work towards that dream?
- Does your school have a library with books that reflect you, your family, your community, or your experiences? What is it, or would it be like, to be at a school where that is not the case?

- Which of the following does your school have: a full-time librarian, a computer lab, a science lab, art class, music class, dual language learning. Of the things missing from your school, which would you and your peers benefit most from? Explain. If your school has all of these, what would it be like to lose one or more of these offerings?

The Lesson: Use the following activities to help accomplish lesson objectives.

Opening Activity (15 Minutes): Invite scholars to share the most memorable fact or idea from the previous day's learning. Then have scholars share their understanding of public goods, the right to a high-quality education, and whether access to high-quality privilege is currently a right or a privilege. Discuss what it means to be an advocate and how advocates and activists have played a role in shaping education history so far. *Consider keeping some of the posters with court cases from the previous day to help guide the conversation.*

Then, have scholars share the things they love about their school that they believe should be protected or expanded and made available for all children. Explain that these ideas can be considered "advocacy topics".

Lastly, scholars should shout out different investments or resources needed to make their school a better place for them to learn and grow.

Part One (15 minutes): Break scholars into small groups and send each group to one of the "advocacy stations" around the room. Each station should have the toolkit open to pages 11-13 of the toolkit in case the ideas or conversations stall. SLIs should be at each station to help scholars understand the various advocacy topics. Scholars should use sticky notes to respond to each prompt. Groups should have 2-3 minutes per station, rotating around the room until all groups have responded to each.

Part Two (15 minutes): Give an overview of op-eds to scholars, found on page 9 of the toolkit. Then scholars should walk around to identify common themes or topics among all the stations take note of the ideas that could become strong topics for an Op-Ed.

Part Three (20 minutes): Have scholars work with their small groups to do a connected stories/yarn toss, shared story activity. One SLI should start with a ball of yarn and share their response to the first question. Hold the end of the yarn and toss the ball to a scholar to share their response. Continue until all scholars have shared. Cut the end of the thread and lay the pattern down gently. Repeat the activity with a different yarn color for the second question and the third.

1. Share one good thing about public education and the programs or offerings

it has made available to you.

2. Share one resource or program, otherwise known as an investment, that you and your peers would benefit from. *Think about the list of topics around the room and consider which you and your classmates would benefit from the most and why.*
3. Why does public education matter? What would happen if it went away?

Have scholars consider how their yarn and stories overlap with one another.

Part Four (15 minutes): Have scholars work independently to turn their responses into short paragraphs. Make the following prompts available for scholars who need additional ideas:

1. Why do you think some schools have more resources than others?
2. What helps you learn best, and is your school giving you those things? If yes, what difference would it make if those things were taken away? If no, what difference would it make if those things were offered?
3. What would you say if a school leader asked, "What does your dream school look like?" Support your opinion.
4. Why is it important for adults to listen to us when we tell them what we need?
5. Why is it important for Black and Brown scholars to speak up about our school experiences?

Encourage scholars to include personal stories, feelings, and supporting facts (either from CDF's State of America's Children report chapter on education, or page 2 of the toolkit). Emphasize how facts enhance the legitimacy of Op-Eds.

Closing Activity (10 minutes): Allow a few scholars to share their paragraphs before reflecting on the power of writing opinion pieces to share your thoughts.

OPTION FIVE: “We Are The Voice” Writing Youth Op-Eds

Ideal for groups planning to write Op-Eds.

Daily Exploration: Naming the good in public education and the investments needed.

Total Time: 120 minutes

Common Core Standards:

- W.3-5.1 – Write opinion pieces with reasons and examples.
- W.3-5.4 – Produce clear writing appropriate to task and audience.
- W.3-5.5 – Develop and strengthen writing through planning and revising.
- SL.3-5.4 – Report on a topic with relevant details and speak clearly.

Lesson Objectives: Scholars should be able to:

- Identify key components of thriving, equitable public education experiences.
- Write narratives advocating for clearly defined solutions to complex issues.

Materials: index cards/Op-Ed Anchor Charts/*Time for Kids* Opinion Articles/
markers/pens pencils/newspapers/hula hoops/2025 NDSA Toolkit

The Set-Up: Use the instructions below to set up the space for your afternoon activity.

1. Servant Leader Interns should print Opinion Articles written by children and published by *Time for Kids* ahead of this lesson. Articles and responses can be found at <https://www.timeforkids.com/g56/sections/opinion/>
2. Prepare Op-Ed anchor charts on paper by drawing or typing and printing copies ahead of the lesson. Charts below:

Opinion: What Do I Love About School?	
Reason #1 and Example	
Reason #2 and Example	

Opinion: What Needs to Change so I enjoy school more or What does the school need to offer more of so I can become a (insert dream career) in the future?	
Reason #1 and Example	
Reason #2 and Example	

The Lesson: Use the following activities to help accomplish lesson objectives.

Opening Activity (15 Minutes): Invite scholars to share the most memorable fact or idea from the previous day's learning. Then have scholars share their understanding of public goods, the right to a high-quality education, and whether access to high-quality privilege is currently a right or a privilege. Discuss what it means to be an advocate and how advocates and activists have played a role in shaping education history so far. *Consider keeping some of the posters with court cases from the previous day to help guide the conversation.*

Then, have scholars share the things they love about their school that they believe should be protected or expanded and made available for all children. Explain that these ideas can be considered "advocacy topics".

Lastly, work with scholars to name investments or resources needed to make their school a better place for them to learn and grow.

Part One (10 minutes): Explain to scholars that an Op-Ed is a short article where people share opinions backed by facts in order to try to influence others. Provide scholars with printed articles and responses from *Time for Kids* and have them read examples aloud before sharing their own responses and defenses.

Part Two (15 minutes): Have scholars work in groups to talk through the document and their school experiences as scholars complete their own Op-Ed anchor charts.

Part Three (20 minutes): Scholars should use their Op-Ed anchor charts, facts from page 2 of the NDSA toolkit, and the sentence starters below to draft their own Op-Ed paragraph independently on an index card:

Sentence Starters to Highlight the Good:

- I love that my school has...
- I love that my school offers...
- My school gives us a chance to...
- When I grow up I want to be a (insert career). My schools supports or inspires this by offering...

Sentence Starters to Highlight Investment and Resources Needed:

- If my school stopped offering _____ I would feel_____ because....
- I believe all schools should offer_____ because....
- Decision-makers like school board members and school administrators should invest in bringing or expanding _____ because....
- Without public education our community/world/ would feel more....

Scholars should write their age and the grade they are entering in the Fall at the bottom of their card. Use last ten minutes of this time block for peer review and editing.

Part Four (30 minutes): Two Options for Games (select one or split the time and do both games):

- **Option 1:** Servant Leader Intern should place a few pieces of newspaper on the ground throughout the room. Explain that you will play music and when the music stops you will yell out “The boat is sinking! Group yourselves into groups of (insert number)”. Scholars should huddle together on a piece of newspaper. Players not standing on a sheet should read their paragraphs aloud. These players can help facilitate the game by whispering numbers to the SLIs calling out.
- **Option 2:** Place several hula hoops around the room and group scholars in groups of up to eight per hula hoop. Arrange them in a circle and have them put their hands out palms up. Place the hula hoop in the center of the circle, resting it on their fingertips. Their goal is to set the hula hoop on the ground without dropping it or hooking their index fingers around it. Last group to raise their hula hoop should read their paragraphs aloud. If time permits for additional rounds, add difficulty level by have scholars use only one hand or just their index fingers. No teams should be eliminated, however if the same team is last again- the second to last team should share out their Op-Eds.

Part Five (15 minutes): Have scholars reflect on Op-Eds and their relevancy. Engage them in the following discussion questions:

- Why is it powerful to share your opinion through writing?
- What makes an Op-Ed convincing to a reader?
- Which Op-Ed or advocacy topic could you relate to other than your own?
- Who do you want to read your Op-Ed? What do you want them to feel or do after reading it?
- How does telling your story help other children and young people?
- If we all sent our Op-Eds to the school board or mayor, what change do you think could happen?

Closing Activity (15 minutes): Have scholars write letters to local or national newspapers and magazines sharing their Op-Eds and a short message about why adults should listen to young people when it comes to discuss around public education.

Level III Scholars (6th-8th Grade)

Day One

Daily Exploration: Is Public Education A Right or a Privilege?

Total Time: 60 minutes

Common Core Standards:

- RH.6-12.8. Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.
- SL.6-12.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade-level topics, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- SL.6-12.4. Present claims and findings, sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to support main ideas.
- W.6-12.1. Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

Lesson Objectives: Scholars should be able to:

- Research and understand the history of public education in the United States.
- Participate in debates on whether education should be considered a right or a privilege.

Materials: printed resources (see set-up section for details)/construction paper/markers/colored pencils/copies of pages 11-13 of the NDSA toolkit/computer and internet access

The Set-Up: Use the instructions below to set up the space for your afternoon activity.

1. Servant Leader Interns should create and post signs on opposite sides of the room labeled "Right" and "Privilege". Signs should include the following definitions:
 - Right: Something people are legally or morally entitled to simply because they are human.
 - Privilege: A special benefit or advantage that is given to some people but not guaranteed to everyone.
2. Set-up a relay race. Create a relay race with different stations representing essential elements of public education and its historical access disparities. Station Challenges:
 - Reading Station: Print all historical events found in the Day One

activity for Level II scholars, in the section entitled “Education History Timeline Stops”. Cut passages into strips for teams.

- Math & Resources Station: Have calculators and charts available for certain groups. Print the charts below:

School Budget Items and Cost

School A Budget: _____	
School Budget List	
Item	Cost
Clean/ Safe Building	275,000
3 Teachers per Grade	400,000
Technology (laptops for students)	200,00
After- School Programs	70,000
Classroom Supplies	90,000
Textbooks	150,00
Field Trips	50,000
Free Tutoring	75,000
School Counselor	150,000
Art and Music Programs	100,000
Sports	75,000

School B Budget: _____	
School Budget List	
Item	Cost
Clean/ Safe Building	275,000
3 Teachers per Grade	400,000
Technology (laptops for students)	200,00
After- School Programs	70,000
Classroom Supplies	90,000
Textbooks	150,00
Field Trips	50,000
Free Tutoring	75,000
School Counselor	150,000
Art and Music Programs	100,000
Sports	75,000

- Advocacy Station: Scholars create a mini-poster with a statement advocating for equal education rights.
 - Print the following list of advocacy slogans for the privileged

group:

- Books we need, let us read!
- We are strong, we belong!
- Music, dance, let us shine — public school, it's our time!
- See Yourself on the Shelf!
- Smaller Classes, Bigger Futures!
- Keep It Hot, We'll Learn a Lot!

Print copies of pages 11-13 of the NDSA toolkit and have the disadvantaged group create their own slogan for a poster.

- Problem-Solving Station: Index cards and pens needed.

The Lesson: Use the following activities to help accomplish lesson objectives.

Opening Activity (10 Minutes): Point to the two signs on the opposite sides of the room and have volunteers read the definitions of “right” and “privilege” aloud. Then an SLI should read the following statements aloud:

- Access to quality education is currently a....
- Free education is currently a....
- Having learning accommodations is currently a....
- Receiving free or reduced school lunch is currently a....
- Learning in a safe, clean school building is currently a....
- Access to AP or Honors classes is currently a....
- Having internet access to complete homework is currently a....
- Attending preschool or early childhood programs is currently a....

After each statement is read aloud, scholars should move to the side that reflects whether the statement currently represents a right or a privilege. Scholars should discuss their reasoning with someone near them. Scholars should also discuss if the side they are standing on is how it *should be*. Invite a few scholars to share with the larger group.

*Example: Scholar A moves to the side to show they believe that access to quality education is currently a privilege. Scholar A should explain their rationale to a peer and answer a follow-up question on whether access to quality education **should be** a right or a privilege.*

Repeat process for each statement. After all statements, have scholars share any realizations they had with the larger group and reflect on whether all children in the U.S. have access to the same educational opportunities.

Part One (25 minutes): Divide scholars into 4 teams. Teams 1 and 2 experience a level of privilege that grants them higher access to opportunities thrive, and

teams 3 and 4 experience a level of being under-resourced that causes them to experience obstacles and barriers to success. Each team must complete 4 stations in a relay format, with 1 scholar retrieving the information from the station and bringing it back to their team for support solving it, and running their teams answer(s) back to the station when ready. Teams must complete one station at a time before tagging the next teammate in for the next station. **Teams should not be aware of who is advantaged or disadvantaged until the end of the relay.** Place an adult or “coach” to assist *only* the privileged teams (e.g., providing tips or help), subtly reinforcing the differences.

1. **Reading Station:** Teams read a short passage about the history of public education access (e.g., segregation, underfunding) and create a slogan representative of the summary. Passage options can be found in the Day One activity for Level II scholars, in the section entitled “Education History Timeline Stops”.

Well-resourced teams: SLI should bring one of the shorter summaries to the team and they should create a slogan based on the summary. SLI can help come up with the slogan.

Under resourced teams: Team member should walk to the opposite side of the room to retrieve two passages, bringing them back to the team to read and summarize the information before creating a slogan to explain it. Team member who got the passages should run and tell their slogans to the SLI in charge of the station.

Ensure all teams have different passages. Overlap is okay but make sure all events are covered.

2. **Math Station:** Scholars will compare school funding and calculate disparities. Privileged teams should receive calculators for this activity.

Instructions for scholars:

Step 1: You are comparing two schools that both have 300 students:
School A has \$5,000 per student x 300 students
School B has \$1,000 per student x 300 students

Calculate the Difference: How much money does School A receive?
School B? What is the difference in how much School A receives compared to School B?

Step 2: Imagine you are a school principal and use your budget above to choose which items School A and School B can afford.

School Budget Items and Cost

School A Budget: _____	
School Budget List	
Item	Cost
Clean/ Safe Building	275,000
3 Teachers per Grade	400,000
Technology (laptops for students)	200,00
After- School Programs	70,000
Classroom Supplies	90,000
Textbooks	150,00
Field Trips	50,000
Free Tutoring	75,000
School Counselor	150,000
Art and Music Programs	100,000
Sports	75,000

School B Budget: _____	
School Budget List	
Item	Cost
Clean/ Safe Building	275,000
3 Teachers per Grade	400,000
Technology (laptops for students)	200,00
After- School Programs	70,000
Classroom Supplies	90,000
Textbooks	150,00
Field Trips	50,000
Free Tutoring	75,000
School Counselor	150,000
Art and Music Programs	100,000
Sports	75,000

3. **Advocacy Station:** Scholars create mini-posters with a statement advocating for equal education rights.

Well-resourced teams: Receive a list of printed advocacy slogans and create creatively decorated signs with the slogans.

Under-resourced teams: Received pages 11-13 of the NDSA toolkit

to identify an advocacy topic they'd like to create an advocacy slogan for.

4. **Problem-Solving Station:** Have teams discuss what young people can do to advocate for equitable access to education.

Well-resourced teams: Give groups one index card and writing utensil per team member. Each team member should write a different idea on an index card.

Under-resourced teams: Give the groups index cards for each team member but only one writing utensil per 3 scholars. Each team member should write a different idea on an index card.

Part One Reflection (10 minutes): The first team to finish wins, but as a full group discuss the differences in experience between the "well-resourced" and "under-resources" groups and how it relates to the public education experience they receive depending on where they live. Teams should share a short summary of the educational events they read about in the reading station using their own words, as well as their slogans- and share how it relates to public education today.

Closing Activity (15 minutes): Have full group watch "San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez (1973): Supreme Court Cases" by Academy 4 Social Civics on YouTube. Have scholars share reflections to the Supreme Court saying that the law didn't violate federal law be access to equitable education is **not a right** in the United States.

Then on chart paper, scholars should work with their teams to discuss and answer the following questions:

- Based on the video and today's activity, is education currently a right or a privilege in this country? Is this how it should be? Explain.
- List the ways in which public education benefits everyone in society.
- Share the things you love about your public education experience, and the investment you need more of to thrive.

Day Two

OPTION ONE: “Conscious Apparel Design”

Ideal for groups planning to host a march, rally, or protest.

Daily Exploration: Messaging and visual design for advocacy.

Note: *There are many different Day Two lesson plans to select from. Select the (one) lesson plan that best compliments your site’s NDSA plans. Your site can use more lesson plans but will need to build in additional time or days.*

Total Time: 90 minutes

Common Core Standards:

- W.6-12.1. Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- SL.6-12.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade-level topics, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- SL.6-12.5. Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims, and add interest.

Lesson Objectives: Scholars should be able to design wearable and displayable advocacy pieces that communicate key messages related to the value of public education.

Materials: writing paper/chart paper/colored pencils/markers/printed t-shirt templates/printed tote bag templates/blank t-shirts/blank tote bags/fabric paint/fabric markers

The Set-Up: Use the instructions below to set up the space for your afternoon activity.

1. Servant Leader Interns should print or write out multiple copies of the following list of advocacy slogans:
 - See Yourself on the Shelf! or Books For All!
 - Smaller Classes, Bigger Futures!
 - Keep It Hot, We’ll Learn a Lot!
 - Where Words Fail, Art and Music Speak. or Art is Not Extra!
 - Let Us Learn Beyond the Desk!
 - Safe Schools for Every Student, Every Day.

- Our Voices Matter!
2. Servant Leader Interns should print multiple copies of pages 11-13 of the NDSA toolkit which lists education advocacy topics.
 3. Servant Leader Interns should print copies of t-shirt or tote bag templates. Servant Leader Interns should prepare creation stations for scholars to make shirts or totes (resource permitting).

Note: These resources and websites can be use to produce iron-on templates for scholar apparel if you'd like scholars to vote on one design as their official NDSA apparel:

- *StickerYou*
- *Etsy*
- *YouCustomizelt*
- *Avery*
- *Dollar Tree's Crafter's Square Vinyl*

The Lesson: Use the following activities to help accomplish lesson objectives.

Opening Activity (15 Minutes): Reflect on the history of public education learned yesterday and its relation to the state of public education today. Then, discuss the following question as a group:

- Is our public education system like the relay race? Is that fair?
- What do you love about your public school? *Think about the courses, enrichment activities, community building activities, library, etc.* Do all students have access to the things you named? Why should the things you love be protected or expanded for other students?
- Who makes decisions about public school funding, courses, and offerings? How are they elected or put into power?

Part One (20 minutes): Scholars will have the opportunity to create apparel with strong messages to raise awareness of educational issues. Items can be worn during march or displayed as art.

Step One: Divide scholars into small groups. Scholars should analyze the list of examples of slogans and symbols from past education and social justice movements before discussing what makes a powerful message and how colors, words, and images persuade people to take action.

Step Two: Groups should review the list of education advocacy topics from pages 11-13 of the NDSA Toolkit and pick an advocacy topic that resonates with them as something all young people should have access to.

Step Three: Groups should brainstorm catchy slogans based on the topics group members selected. Select 2-3 to write on a shared piece of chart paper at the front of the room.

Part Two (15 minutes): Allow all scholars to review the final list of catchy slogans. View by going to the chart or SLI can read slogans aloud. Individual scholars should select the advocacy issue and slogan the resonates most with their views on the investments needed to make public education great.

If possible, group scholars with others who selected the same topic or slogan. Groups should use Canva, a blank printed t-shirt template, or tote template to sketch out their design.

Part Three (20 minutes): Resource permitting, allow scholars to use shirts or totes, fabric markers, fabric paint, t-shirt press, or other materials to create their wearable apparel.

Closing Activity (20 minutes): The full group should discuss how visual messages change the way people think, and the messages they want to share with elected officials and school board members who make decisions about the funding and programming they receive through their public education. Explore how everyone's public education needs might be different but equally important.

Lastly, use 10 minutes to write letters to school board members and elected officials inviting them to join the site for NDSA so they can view the art and hear and respond to scholars' opinions on "the good" in public education, what needs to be protected, and what investments are needed to make it great.

OPTION TWO: “Collective Conscious Art Design”

Ideal for groups planning to host a gallery walk.

Daily Exploration: Messaging and visual design for advocacy.

Total Time: 90 minutes

Common Core Standards:

- W.6-12.1. Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- SL.6-12.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade-level topics, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- SL.6-12.5. Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims, and add interest.

Lesson Objectives: Scholars should be able to design displayable advocacy pieces that communicate key messages related to the value of public education.

Materials: writing paper/chart paper/poster paper/colored pencils/markers/printed t-shirt templates/printed tote bag templates

The Set-Up: Use the instructions below to set up the space for your afternoon activity.

1. Servant Leader Interns should print or write out multiple copies of the following list of advocacy slogans:
 - See Yourself on the Shelf! or Books For All!
 - Smaller Classes, Bigger Futures!
 - Keep It Hot, We’ll Learn a Lot!
 - Where Words Fail, Art and Music Speak. or Art is Not Extra!
 - Let Us Learn Beyond the Desk!
 - Safe Schools for Every Student, Every Day.
 - Our Voices Matter!
2. Servant Leader Interns should print multiple copies of pages 11-13 of the NDSA toolkit which lists education advocacy topics.
3. Servant Leader Interns should print copies of t-shirt or tote bag templates. Servant Leader Interns should prepare creation stations for scholars to make shirts or totes (resource permitting).

The Lesson: Use the following activities to help accomplish lesson objectives.

Opening Activity (10 Minutes): Reflect on the history of public education learned yesterday and its relation to the state of public education today. Then, discuss the following question as a group:

- Is our public education system like the relay race? Is that fair?
- What do you love about your public school? *Think about the courses, enrichment activities, community building activities, library, etc.* Do all students have access to the things you named? Why should the things you love be protected or expanded for other students?
- Who makes decisions about public school funding, courses, and offerings? How are they elected or put into power?

Part One (15 minutes): Scholars will have the opportunity to create apparel with strong messages to raise awareness of educational issues. Items can be worn during march or displayed as art.

Step One: Divide scholars into small groups. Scholars should analyze the list of examples of slogans and symbols from past education and social justice movements before discussing what makes a powerful message and how colors, words, and images persuade people to take action.

Step Two: Groups should review the list of education advocacy topics from pages 11-13 of the NDSA Toolkit and pick an advocacy topic that resonates with them as something all young people should have access to.

Step Three: Groups should brainstorm catchy slogans based on the topics group members selected. Select 2-3 to write on a shared piece of chart paper at the front of the room.

Part Two (15 minutes): Allow all scholars to review the final list of catchy slogans. View by going to the chart or SLI can read slogans aloud. Individual scholars should select the advocacy issue and slogan the resonates most with their views on the investments needed to make public education great.

If possible, group scholars with others who selected the same topic or slogan. Scholars should use Canva, a blank printed t-shirt template, or tote template to sketch out their individual designs.

Part Three (15 minutes): Groups should then combine their designs onto a poster board to create a mini mural or some other form of artwork. While the shirts represent investments needed to make public education great, their final artwork should also allude to the existing good in public education and the things that

should be protected. Groups should title their work and include a short group artist statement taped below the final piece (2-3 sentences explaining the meaning of their design). Groups should hang work around the room.

Part Four (15 minutes): Conduct a gallery walk, giving each scholar 4 sticky notes to leave comments or questions on other groups' work. Encourage respectful constructive feedback with prompts like:

- Leave a note if something inspires you.
- Ask a question about the message.
- Suggest an idea to strengthen the message.
- Share what this reminds you of.
- Share why their message or visuals stood out.

Save 5 minutes at the end of this activity for groups to reflect on the feedback they received.

Closing Activity (20 minutes): The full group should discuss how visual messages change the way people think, and the messages they want to share with elected officials and school board members who make decisions about the funding and programming they receive through their public education. Explore how everyone's public education needs might be different but equally important.

Lastly, use 10 minutes to write letters to school board members and elected officials inviting them to join the site for NDSA so they can view the art and hear and respond to scholars' opinions on "the good" in public education, what needs to be protected, and what investments are needed to make it great.

OPTION THREE: “Conscious Voices- Writing to Advocate for Educational Justice: Using Your Voice to Spark Change”

Ideal for groups planning to write and publish Op-Eds.

Daily Exploration: Messaging and visual design for advocacy.

Total Time: 90 minutes

Common Core Standards:

- W.6-12.1. Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- SL.6-12.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grade-level topics, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- SL.6-12.5. Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims, and add interest.

Lesson Objectives: Scholars should be able to:

- Write short opinion editorials (op-ed) to raise awareness about social issues.
- Conduct research to include evidence that will inform writing.

Materials: writing paper/computer or internet access/chart paper/pens and pencils/printed resources

The Set-Up: Use the instructions below to set up the space for your afternoon activity.

1. Servant Leader Interns should print different Op-Eds and different topics from <https://www.timeforkids.com/g56/sections/opinion/> ahead of the lesson.
2. Servant Leader Interns should print multiple copies of pages 11-13 of the NDSA toolkit which lists education advocacy topics.
3. Servant Leader Interns should print page 2 of the NDSA toolkit and/or the education chapter from the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) State of America’s Children report.

The Lesson: Use the following activities to help accomplish lesson objectives.

Opening Activity (15 Minutes): Pose the following discussion questions to scholars to turn and talk with a partner about. Allow some scholars to share out.

- What do young people need or deserve to succeed in school? Do all young

people have equal access to these things?

- What educational advocacy issues make you want to speak out? *Consider sharing examples with scholars from pages 11-13 of the NDSA toolkit.*
- Why do your voices and experiences matter in the conversations surrounding public education?
- Share what you know about newspapers and Op-Eds.

Part One (15 minutes): Divide scholars into small groups. Distribute printed examples of Op-Eds among groups and have them work together to identify: 1) The claim or stance be raised or defended; 2) Supporting reasons or examples; 3) The call to action and 4) The tone (i.e. emotional persuasive, etc.). Groups should share their findings.

Part Two (45 minutes): Scholars should work in small groups to select one public education advocacy topic. Consider selecting topic from pages 11-13 of toolkit if groups struggle to identify ideas.

Draft a group Op-Ed about their selected topic using the outline below:

- **Headline:** Grab attention with a bold or clever title.
- **Opening Paragraph:** Introduce the issue and clearly state your opinion.
- **Body Paragraphs:** Provide 2–3 reasons with personal stories, observations, or facts. *Consider using facts from page 2 of the NDSA toolkit.*
- **Closing Paragraph:** Re-state your point and give a call to action (what should people do or care about?).

Sentence starters to support scholar thinking:

- Every young person enrolled in public education should have access to _____ at school.
- Public schools need more _____ to support their young people.
- Young people deserve equitable access to high quality education because _____.
- Based on the history of public education and its role in society, it should be guaranteed as a right because _____.
- I believe...
- This matters because...
- We need to...
- Imagine if we lived in a world where...

Closing Activity (15 minutes): Allow groups to share out, highlighting why their message is important for people who make decisions related to school funding, staffing, enrichment and class offerings, etc. to read. Then, ask scholars which local or national news newspaper, magazine, or news outlets they would send their writings to and why. Consider publishing all writings into a class blog and sending them to local newspapers.

Level IV Scholars (9th-12th Grade)

Day One

Daily Exploration: Bridging the “then” and the “now”

Total Time: 120 minutes

Common Core Standards:

- SL.11-12.2. Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.
- SL.11-12.4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.
- W.11-12.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Lesson Objectives: Scholars should be able to:

- Recall prior knowledge to reflect on the status of complex issues.
- Analyze past and present-day disparities in public education.
- Create research-based persuasive writing pieces.

Materials: poster board/chart paper/sticky notes/ markers/research resources

The Set-Up: Use the instructions below to set up the space for your afternoon activity.

1. Servant Leader Interns should print copies of the “Public Education is Public Good” Worksheet which includes a graphic organizer and the discussion questions for the activity in part one. Worksheet:
<https://bit.ly/Level4NDSAWorksheet>
2. Print copies of San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez court case summary from <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1972/71-1332>
Alternatively, use a projector to project the website for the full group during the activity.

The Lesson: Use the following activities to help accomplish lesson objectives.

Opening Activity (15 Minutes): Scholars will reflect on their prior knowledge of public education through a “Cross the Line” Activity.

Choose at least ten prompting questions, pulling from each category, to ask scholars during the activity. If they agree with the statement, instruct them to cross the line. If they are unsure or disagree with the statement, instruct them to remain still. After completing the activity, engage scholars in the discussion questions. If time permits, more questions can be asked during this activity.

Cross the Line Activity Prompts:

Personal School Experience

- Cross the line if you go to or have ever gone to a public school.
- Cross the line if you've had a class where it felt way too crowded to learn.
- Cross the line if your school has ever run out of books, laptops, or other resources.
- Cross the line if there's ever been a time you didn't feel safe or supported at school.
- Cross the line if you've ever had to share or wait for basic materials, like textbooks or calculators, because there weren't enough.

Identity & Fairness in School

- Cross the line if you've ever felt treated unfairly at school because of your race, gender, or background.
- Cross the line if you or someone you know has been punished more harshly than others for the same thing.
- Cross the line if your school has ever cut or didn't offer classes like art, music, or AP courses because of funding.
- Cross the line if you've had a teacher who made a real impact on your life.
- Cross the line if you've ever had to speak up for yourself or someone else to be treated fairly.

History & Awareness

- Cross the line if you've heard of Brown v. Board of Education.
- Cross the line if you've learned about school segregation in any of your classes.
- Cross the line if you think all public schools give students the same opportunities.
- Cross the line if you've noticed differences in school quality depending on where people live.

- Cross the line if you believe education should be considered a basic right for everyone.

Action & Advocacy

- Cross the line if you believe your voice can help change things at school or in your community.
- Cross the line if you think schools should teach more about social justice, equity, and activism.
- Cross the line if you've ever been part of a protest, campaign, or project that pushed for change.
- Cross the line if you believe all public schools should be fully funded, no matter the neighborhood.
- Cross the line if you want to be a part of the solution.

Discussion Questions:

- What stood out to you during the activity? Were there any moments that surprised you?
- How did it feel to step forward—or to stay behind—for certain statements?
- What did this activity reveal about the different experiences scholars have within public education?
- Why is it important to talk about equity, fairness, and access when we talk about public schools?
- Which statements struck a chord with you? Explain.

Part One (15 minutes): As a full group use printed copies or a projected internet source to explore the facts and the outcome of the San Antonio Independent School District v. Rodriguez court case: <https://www.oyez.org/cases/1972/71-1332>

Part Two (30 minutes): Have scholars watch the following videos to learn more about key historical events that have impacted public education in America.

As scholars watch the videos, have them complete the *Public Education is a Public Good* worksheet. Alternatively, they may create a KWL Chart or Mind Map to capture key facts and ideas that will help them respond to the discussion questions below.

If your site does not have access to the technology needed to display the videos, scholars can instead analyze historical articles covering the same events and respond to the discussion questions. Links to the articles are included in this lesson plan.

Display Guiding Questions on Board:

- Who were the advocates or changemakers in this movement?
- What specific change(s) were they fighting for?
- What actions did they take to make their voices heard?
- What makes their actions an example of advocacy?

1. Brown vs. Board of Education:

- a. **Video Link:** https://youtu.be/g41X6_XY1rQ?si=0MN_a-G1H4ZJVeuk
- b. **Article Link:** <https://naacp.org/history-brown-v-board-education>

2. The Chicano Movement:

- a. **Video Link:**
<https://youtu.be/GWWPW7I0iU?si=HMEPSR3BTfUZEzQy>
 - i. *Recommended to watch up to 4:30 and then if time permits to finish the video.*
- b. **Article Link:** <https://www.history.com/articles/east-los-angeles-chicano-student-walkouts-1968>

3. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act:

- a. **Video Link:** <https://youtu.be/3XMndYNEGFA?si=4bCQ2vUssBI-I7Da>
- b. **Article Link:** <https://www.nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/students-disabilities-before-IDEA>

4. Plyler vs. Doe

- a. **Video Link:** <https://youtu.be/rKKJ-GUG7m0?si=SiV-pxAgIV3Jz6rP>
- b. **Article Link:**
https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/sites/default/files/research/public_education_for_immigrant_students_understanding_plyer_v_doe.pdf

After watching the videos, scholars share reflections before engaging scholars in discussion about what these moments in history teach us about the power of young people, families, and communities in shaping public education.

Part Three (30 minutes): Explain to scholars the history and significance, and importance of Op-Eds. (Refer to the NDSA Toolkit for more information about Op-Eds.)

Divide scholars into cooperative learning groups and assign each group a topic from today's lesson (Brown vs Board, The Chicano Movement, Plyler vs. Doe or IDEA). Then, have scholars create an Op-Ed draft based upon their group's topic, highlighting the impact of these historical events and what would happen if they were taken away.

If time is limited, scholars should at least complete an outline including the components below. The full draft can be completed after the session.

Required Components for Op-Ed Draft:

1. **Title:** Create a strong title that shows your opinion and pulls readers in.
2. **Hook:** Start with something that grabs attention—like a bold statement, question, or quote.
3. **Your Opinion (Thesis):** Clearly say what you believe about the topic your group was assigned.
4. **Background Info (Historical Context):** Briefly explain what happened in the past and why it mattered.
5. **Why It Still Matters (Current Relevance):** Connect the issue to today. Why should people care now?
Support Your Point (Evidence & Examples): Use facts or examples from the lesson or your own knowledge to back up your opinion.
6. **What Should Happen (Call to Action or Reflection):** End with what you want readers to think, feel, or do after reading your piece.

Part Four (15 minutes): Bring all groups back together to share out Op-Eds. Review with scholars the main historical events explored today and how they relate to the status of public education. Ask scholars “if actions of past advocates helped shaped public education into what it is today, what responsibility do they have to protect it and improve its future?”

Closing Activity (15 minutes): Allow scholars to independently explore the educational advocacy topics on pages 11-13. Scholars should share which topic they’d like to write an independent Op-Ed about and/or which topic resonates most with them the most and why. Explain that on NDSA they will have a chance to write an Op-Ed on that topic and think through which local and national newspapers and magazines they would send the writing to and why.

Day Two

Research-Based Art as a Form of Protest

Ideal for groups hosting marches, rallies, protests, or gallery walks.

Daily Exploration: Being an advocate for public education

Total Time: 120 minutes

Common Core Standards:

- SL.11-12.1.A. Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.
- SL.11-12.2. Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.
- W.11-12.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

Lesson Objectives: Scholars should be able to:

- Recall information learned the previous day.
- Analyze key issues and historical developments in public education.
- Evaluate perspectives on current education reforms.

Materials: poster paper/gallery walk worksheets/markers/pens/pencils/timer

The Set-Up: Use the instructions below to set up the space for your afternoon activity.

1. Servant Leader Interns should print or write the following words and definitions on construction or poster paper ahead of the activity:
 - **Right:** Something people are legally or morally entitled to simply because they are human.
 - **Privilege:** A special benefit or advantage that is given to some people but not guaranteed to everyone.
 - **Public Education:** Free school open to everyone.
 - Equity vs. Equality – Equality = everyone gets the same. Equity = everyone gets what they need
 - **Access:** Being able to actually use or participate in something.

- **Public Good:** Resources every member of the public can consume freely without worrying about their use reducing availability for others.
- **Private Good:** Members of the public can be prevented from using them if they do not pay or if someone else using it reduces its availability.

2. Servant Leader Intern should print copies of curated history worksheets from <https://bit.ly/4cZzGjA> ahead of the lesson.

The Lesson: Use the following activities to help accomplish lesson objectives.

Opening Activity (15 Minutes): Have scholars recall information learned on the previous day and why advocates matter, citing examples from the previous day's learning. Then, have scholars share their understanding of the words bolded below. After scholars share their understandings, reveal the following definitions:

- **Right:** Something people are legally or morally entitled to simply because they are human.
- **Privilege:** A special benefit or advantage that is given to some people but not guaranteed to everyone.
- **Public Education:** Free school open to everyone.
- Equity vs. Equality – Equality = everyone gets the same. Equity = everyone gets what they need
- **Access:** Being able to actually use or participate in something.
- **Public Good:** Resources every member of the public can consume freely without worrying about their use reducing availability for others.
- **Private Good:** Members of the public can be prevented from using them if they do not pay or if someone else using it reduces its availability.

Part One (45 minutes): Have an open discussion about “the good” in public education (i.e. what scholars love about their schools, the opportunities it affords them, what role the school plays in the community, etc.) and things that need protecting or the investments needed to make all public education great. After discussing, divide scholars into small groups to research one of the eight topics listed:

1. History of Public Education
2. Funding & Equity
3. Standardized Testing & Accountability
4. School Choice
5. Teacher Pay & Working Conditions
6. Technology in the Classroom

7. Student Voice & Discipline
8. Education Reform Proposals

Groups should use the curated worksheets, found at <https://bit.ly/4cZzGjA> to complete their guided research. Once research is completed, create research posters highlighting their findings in a creative manner.

Reserve about 15 minutes for scholars hang their posters and participate in a gallery walk to learn more about other topics.

Part Three (30 minutes): Allow scholars to select the topic that resonates most with them and have them create personalized artwork or collages that speak to the good in their own public education experiences and the investments needed to make public education great. Scholars should include titles and captions.

Part Four (25 minutes): Have scholars share the takeaway messages they would like public education funding, offerings, staffing, etc. decision makers to get from their artwork.

Then, scholars should write invitation letters to those decision makers to join them at the site for NDSA activities.

Closing Activity (5 minutes): Have scholars share who they decided to invite and why, as well as why advocacy matters in public education.

NDSA Toolkit 2025



SCAN ME

Acknowledgements and Writers

CDF Freedom Schools would like to thank all Ella Baker Trainers who contributed to this body of work, as well as the related training for program participants during the 2025 Ella Baker Child Policy Training Institute.

Contributing Writers for the 2025 NDSA Lesson Plans:

Level I (K-2nd) Lesson Plan Development

Kira Gailbraith

Morgan Parker

Level II (3rd-5th) Lesson Plan Development

Montayha Adams

Devyn White

Level III (6th-8th) Lesson Plan Development

Jalyn Gilbert

Shonice Pettaway

Level IV (9th-12th) Lesson Plan Development

Janell S. Massaline

Assata Parkins

Facilitators And Curators Of The NDSA Training and Related Materials:

First Year Servant Leader Intern Track

Charity Bickcom

Kaitlyn Foust

Second Year Servant Leader Intern Track

Kaylee Lineberry

Shonice Pettaway

Editor:

Ciara Mackey-Hall

To learn more about the Ella Baker Trainer (EBT) program, or to further engage these individuals in additional curriculum or training development opportunities please contact the *CDF Freedom Schools* national office at freedomschools@childrensdefense.org