



Title: Funding “Great” Schools For All in America

Background: Statistically speaking, American schools have not provided equal educational opportunities to all students. In many schools nationwide, disproportionate numbers of minority students attend schools with inadequate funding, facilities, and materials. In addition, the high school dropout rate for minorities is significantly higher than it is for white students. Consequently, fewer minority students attend college and achieve the education necessary to achieve a higher standard of living. The gap in funding between high and low poverty schools is increasing, despite some reforms in the way school funding dollars are allocated. Wealthy school districts continue to provide superior facilities, programs, and technology, while impoverished schools continue to struggle to provide the most basic materials and instruction. Statistics show that while this gap continues to expand, most Americans are in favor of providing equal funding for schools, even if this means that wealthier school districts distribute some of their funds to poor school districts. It seems that overall, Americans believe the equal educational opportunities are important for all students, not just those fortunate enough to live in school districts that can afford to provide students with a quality educational experience.

Grade Levels: Grades 6-12

Subject Areas: Social Studies, Current Events, Civics, Language Arts, Debate, and Journalism

Learning Objectives:

Students will:

1. Use research skills and primary sources to complete a equal educational opportunities scavenger hunt activity in pairs.
2. Participate in class discussion activities related to school inequities and the characteristics a “great” schools and use reasons, facts, and examples to support their opinions.
3. Use critical reading and viewing skills to locate key facts, examples, and information about the inequities in U.S. schools.
4. Utilize group work roles and strategies to brainstorm and discuss ideas and information related to what makes a “great” school in small groups.
5. Utilize critical thinking skills and analysis to form opinions about the essential things schools must provide in order to help students succeed and cast votes that support those opinions.
6. Utilize basic computation skills to tabulate votes about what makes a “great” school and determine the top three items in each of 5 categories.
7. Create projects designed to raise awareness about inequities in school funding and what can be done to provide all students with “great” schools that can provide them with quality learning experiences.

Relevant National Standards:

This lesson correlates to the national McREL standards located online at <http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks>

Language Arts

Writing

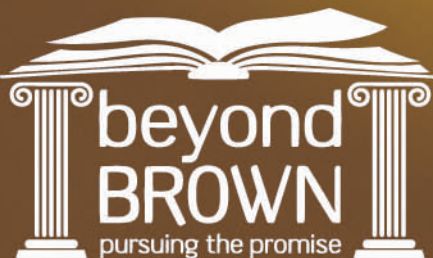
Standard 4: Gathers and uses information for research purposes

Reading

Standard 7: Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of informational texts

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Listening and Speaking

Standard 8: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes

Viewing

Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media

Math

Standard 2: Understands and applies basic and advanced properties of the concepts of numbers

Thinking and Reasoning

Standard 1: Understand and applies the basic principles of presenting an argument

Standard 5: Applies basic trouble-shooting and problem-solving techniques

Standard 6: Applies decision making techniques

Working with Others

Standard 1: Contribute to the overall effort of a group

Standard 4: Displays effective interpersonal communication skills

Materials Needed:

- **Equal Educational Opportunities Scavenger Hunt** worksheet
- 2-4 small prizes to present to students who complete the scavenger hunt first and/or most accurately (optional)
- television with a vcr for viewing film excerpts and/or computers with audio and video capabilities for viewing excerpts from Beyond Brown web site sources
- chart paper
- markers
- small colored stickers (dime or penny sized)
- photocopies of “Beyond Brown” web site materials from “It’s All About the Money” section including summary and facts (optional—see plan)
- **What Makes a Great School?** worksheet (provided with plan)
- computers with word processing and desktop publishing capability (optional)
- a variety of art supplies such as markers, glue, colored pencils, poster board, construction paper, etc. (optional)

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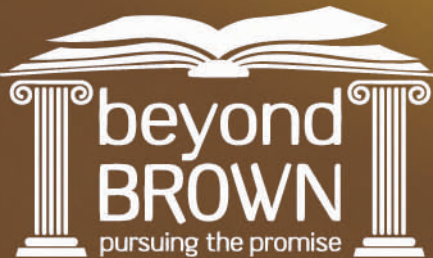
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Procedures:

Part 1: Learning About Educational Inequities in America

1. Create student interest in the types of educational experiences and the level of school success students in U.S. schools have by using the Equal Educational Opportunities Scavenger Hunt activity. As students enter the classroom, have them find a classmate to pair up with for the activity. Direct students to use Internet or library resources (see the Online Resources section as a guide) to find accurate answers to each of the 5 questions on the scavenger hunt. While completing this activity quickly is important, accuracy also counts. Remind students to check sources carefully and record data correctly. Tell students there will be a “prize” for the pair that finishes first and/or has the most correct answers.
2. Direct students to begin work on the scavenger hunt. Use the list of information in the Online Resources section to direct students to web sites that may be helpful to them. As students work, circulate and provide assistance as needed. Once the first pair turns in their scavenger hunt, tell all other groups they will have 5 minutes to finish locating answers to the questions.
3. When time has expired, take time to discuss the correct answers to the scavenger hunt using the key provided. Note that the statistics found by some students may be vary slightly because of the resource used. Have students grade their own papers and record the correct answers on their papers. They will use some of this data for later activities.
4. Once scavenger hunt answers have been reviewed, use each of the 5 questions as a springboard for discussion. Some topics to discuss could include:
 - Why are dropout rates dramatically higher for some students? Give reasons and examples to support your theories.
 - When comparing college enrollment figures, what factors do you think contribute most to why minority students attend college less frequently than whites?
 - When viewing the statistics showing average income, why do you think so many people choose to drop out of high school or forego the opportunity to attend college?
 - When you review the statistics on special education, why do you think there are so few Asian students receiving special services? Support your opinions with reasons and examples.
 - In reviewing the school performance numbers, why do you think African American males are more likely to be held back or be below grade level? Give examples and reasons to support your opinions.
5. Next, have students work in small groups to read about and review the facts surrounding the equality of educational opportunities provided to various groups of students across the nation. Using the Beyond Brown companion web site, have students view the facts section from the “It’s All About the Money” portion of the film at http://www.pbs.org/beyondbrown/legacy/money_summary.html. If Internet access is a problem, print these facts and distribute a copy to each group for discussion. As students review these facts, have them work together to discuss the following questions:
 - How does underfunding contribute to segregation in schools that are supposed to be fully integrated? Give specific examples.
 - In what ways is underfunding a form of racism? Give examples, facts, and reasons to support your opinion.
 - How do problems like the underfunding of schools help to create large groups of people, particularly poor minorities, who believe they are not entitled to and are unable to achieve, so they must settle for lesser education, lower paying jobs, and ultimately, a lower standard of living? Give specific examples to support your opinions.

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Part 2: What Makes a “Great” School?

1. Before students enter the classroom, have 5 stations set up around the classroom. Each station should include 3-4 large pieces of chart paper and 1-2 colored markers. Each station will represent a different topic for students to brainstorm about. Topics should be recorded on the top of each piece of chart paper at the station. The 5 topics to be addressed are:
 - Building and Facilities (overall learning environment, student safety)
 - Classes/Courses (what is offered and how it is taught)
 - Technology (not just computers, but all types of technology)
 - Staffing (qualifications, teaching styles, number of students per class)
 - Other (any other ideas not included in previous categories)
2. To refresh students on the previous day’s content, go to the “Beyond Brown” web site’s section entitled “It’s All About the Money” at http://www.pbs.org/beyondbrown/legacy/money_summary.html to illustrate the discrepancies between what schools are able to provide from one neighborhood to the next. Begin by reading the summary section, then play the video so students can actually see the differences between the two New York schools. In addition, use the charts and graphs found in the For Educators section at <http://www.pbs.org/beyondbrown/foreducators> to show students how the American public feels about the equality of educational opportunities now available and what they would be willing to change in order to provide quality schooling for all students. If Internet access is a problem, have students view the portion of the film from 24:30 to 33:30 to see a comparison of New York schools and learn about the Campaign for Fiscal Equity and their lawsuits related to school funding.
3. Ask students to think about how difficult it would be to make decisions about how money is spent in schools, particularly if the need was greater than the budgeted amount available to the school. Explain to students that this is an issue faced by thousands of school districts across the country each year. They can only provide a set amount of resources to meet the needs of the students. They must use their best judgment to determine what can be provided in each school and how much can be spent.
4. Explain to students that for this lesson, they will be taking on the role of school district leaders, trying to determine what students need in order to be successful in school and determining how to pay for the items that will help students experience this success.
5. Split the class into 5 groups of equal size. Assign each group to one of the 5 stations set up around the classroom. Have each group choose one person to be the recorder. The recorder’s job is to accurately record on the chart paper all ideas and suggestions given by all group members. Another group member should be the leader, making sure that all students are involved in the group discussion and contributing ideas. The leader should remind group members that when brainstorming, no one should comment on ideas shared. The goal is simply to record as many ideas as possible.
6. Explain to students that they will have 3 minutes to work at each station. Throughout that time, it will be up to them to list as many ideas as they can for each topic listed. Groups should add only new ideas to the lists when they move from station to station. The most important thing groups must remember is that they are answering the following question:
 - What makes a great school? List all of the ideas you have about what would be truly beneficial for helping students learn, regardless of cost. Keep in mind that the main goal is to create a list of ideas that could be used to develop a school environment that helps students learn and get the best education possible.

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7. Have groups begin brainstorming. Circulate among the groups to be sure all ideas are being recorded and all students have the opportunity to share their thoughts. Give students verbal prompts when they have 1 minute left at each station. Prompt students to rotate to the next station at appropriate times. Remind students to read the ideas already included on each list before adding new ideas.

8. When all groups have brainstormed at all 5 stations, students should return to the station where they began. At this time, distribute 15 stickers to each student. Explain that the next step in making a great school is identifying the most important things that should be done in each of the 5 areas students brainstormed about. Students will do this by:

- Having the group leader read all items listed for each topic
- Having a group discussion about which items students think are most important for helping students learn
- Giving each group member an opportunity to vote for the 3 ideas on the list they think are most important for making a “great” school. Each student should place a sticker next to each of the 3 ideas he/she likes best. This is their “vote”.

Students should be allowed 5 minutes at each station. Be sure to circulate and let students know when they have one minute remaining. This will ensure all students have enough time to cast their votes. Follow these procedures for all 5 stations.

9. After all groups have “voted” at all stations, students should go back to their seats. Moving from station to station, identify the top 3 ideas from each station based on the number of votes received by each item on the list. In the event of a tie, include additional ideas as needed. As you are tabulating votes, have students record the top ideas on their What Makes a Great School? worksheet.

10. When all votes have been tabulated and students have completed their What Makes a Great School? worksheet, discuss the top items for each of the five topics. Use questions such as:

- Why did you choose these ideas as the most important ones for helping students be successful in school?
- Do you think you would be more likely to apply yourself to learning if you went to a “great” school like the one that was described?
- What are some of your ideas for ways that schools could fund these types of programs so they would be available to all students in all schools?
- Would you be willing to sacrifice other things in schools (i.e. extracurricular activities would no longer be free, etc.) in order to have the kinds of programs you described? Why or why not?
- In your opinion, will schools ever be created equal? Why or why not?

11. Using facts and ideas they have learned from class activities and the information recorded on the What Makes a Great School? worksheet, have students share what they have learned about inequities in school funding and their ideas about how to make “great” schools where students have the greatest potential for success. Students could create pamphlets, posters, billboards, legislative proposals, editorials, letters to the editor, lawmakers, or school district leaders, etc. to raise awareness about school funding issues and share their opinions about what they think will help equalize schools and provide all students with quality learning experiences as well as creative ways for funding these types of programs for all.

12. Once students have completed their projects, they should assemble back into the groups they worked in earlier and share their projects with one another.

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Evaluation Ideas:

1. Students could receive a participation grade for involvement in class discussions and group brainstorming activities.
2. Completion grades can be given for the Equal Educational Opportunities Scavenger Hunt activity and for recording the data necessary on the What Makes a Great School? worksheet.
3. Students could use self or peer evaluations to assess the quality of the project they create to provide public awareness and ideas related to school funding issues and developing “great” schools and they way they present this to the others in their group.
4. Students could receive individual letter or percentage grades for the quality of their public awareness projects. Teachers could use a scoring guide to evaluate whether projects meet established criteria for success.

Extension Activities:

1. After students have determined What Makes a Great School?, they should conduct research to determine how much it would cost to implement an educational program like the one they are suggesting. Using Internet and library resources along with conducting interviews with key school or district personnel, students should determine a realistic budget for putting a program like the one they are suggesting into place in their own school. After reviewing the district budget, students should examine whether or not the district could afford such a program, which programs, if any, would have to be modified or cut in order to provide the items listed on the What Makes a Great School? worksheet, and creative ways for funding these programs so all students could experience success. They could then develop an action plan for implementing these programs and present the plan to school or district personnel and/or board members for consideration.
2. Have students present their projects during a grade level or school-wide assembly dedicated to addressing school issues and what can be done to provide all students with better educational opportunities. Encourage other students to take action and support issues related to educational inequities.
3. Invite district leaders to the classroom to hear student presentations about What Makes a Great School? and have them discuss how some of their ideas could be implemented within the school or the district. If implementation is not a possibility, officials should be prepared to explain why the district is unable to consider their ideas. This would also provide students with an opportunity to discuss budget concerns and inequities among schools with the decision makers that are faced with these responsibilities on daily basis.

Online Resources:

Beyond Brown: Pursuing the Promise

Visit the “Beyond Brown” web site’s section entitled “It’s All About the Money” http://www.pbs.org/beyondbrown/legacy/money_summary.html to illustrate the discrepancies between what schools are able to provide from one neighborhood to the next.

National Center for Education Statistics

<http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/quickfacts.asp> Use the Common Core of Data at access information about statistics related to graduation and dropout rates, special services, and a variety of topics related to education.

U.S. Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov/searchResults.jhtml?oq=Special%20Education%20Statistics&rq=1&tx=by%20race&GO%20-%20Submit%20Search.x=19&GO%20-%20Submit%20Search.y=13>

Find data about all types of education related questions

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U.S. Census Bureau

<http://www.census.gov/Press-Release/www/2001/cb01fff11.html>

Review statistics related to a number of education topics

Campaign for Fiscal Equity

<http://www.cfequity.org/>

Get information about how the non-profit group has worked to provide equal educational opportunities for New York public school students by challenging how schools are funded

Manhattan Comprehensive Night and Day School

<http://www.mancomp.org/home/introduction.htm>

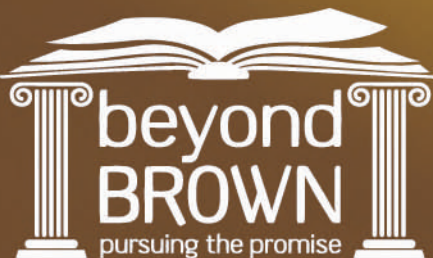
Learn about how this public school has utilized volunteers and fundraising techniques to provide their students with a “great” school

About the Author:

Lisa Prosocki is an independent educational consultant who taught middle school and high school English, social studies, reading, and technology courses for twelve years. Prosocki has worked extensively with PBS authoring and editing many lesson plans for various PBS programs and Teacher-Source. In addition to conducting workshops for teachers at various state and national meetings, Prosocki also works with many corporate clients creating training programs and materials, facilitating leadership and operations workshops, and providing instructional support for new program rollouts. Prosocki has authored one book and also serves as an editor for other writers of instructional materials.

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Name: _____ Date: _____

Equal Educational Opportunities Scavenger Hunt

Directions: Use Internet and library resources to answer each question below. The topic for this scavenger hunt is “Equal Educational Opportunities”. By answering each question, you will learn a little about the equality of educational opportunities provided to American public school students. When you complete the scavenger hunt, turn your paper in to your teacher as soon as possible. Accuracy counts, so be sure your data is correct.

1. What are the high school dropout rates for the following groups of students?

Latino:

African Americans:

Whites:

2. In 2000, what was the average income for each group listed below?

Men

High school dropout:

High school diploma:

Bachelor's degree:

Women

High school dropout:

High school diploma:

Bachelor's degree:

3. Which group of students is most likely to be retained and/or below grade level for their age? Circle one.

White males

Latino males

African American males

White females

Latino females

African American females

4. What are the percentages for college enrollment for each of the groups listed below?

Latinos:

African Americans:

Whites:

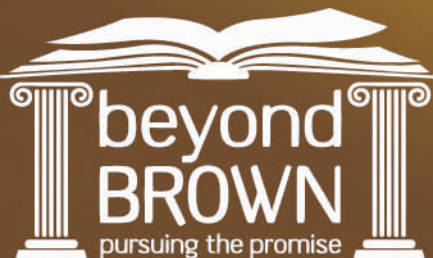
5. What are the percentages of students from each group who receive special education services?

African Americans:

Asians:

Latinos:

Whites:



Teacher Key: Equal Educational Opportunities Scavenger Hunt

Directions: Use Internet and library resources to answer each question below. The topic for this scavenger hunt is “Equal Educational Opportunities”. By answering each question, you will learn a little about the equality of educational opportunities provided to American public school students. When you complete the scavenger hunt, turn your paper in to your teacher as soon as possible. Accuracy counts, so be sure your data is correct.

1. What are the high school dropout rates for the following groups of students?

Latino: 28%

African Americans: 13%

Whites: 7%

2. In 2000, what was the average income for each group listed below?

Men

High school dropout: \$25,095

High school diploma: 34,303

Bachelor's degree: 56,334

Women

High school dropout: 17,919

High school diploma: 24,970

Bachelor's degree: 40,415

3. Which group of students is most likely to be retained and/or below grade level for their age? Circle one.

White males

Latino males

(African American males)

White females

Latino females

African American females

4. What are the percentages for college enrollment for each of the groups listed below?

Latinos: 22%

African Americans: 31%

Whites: 39%

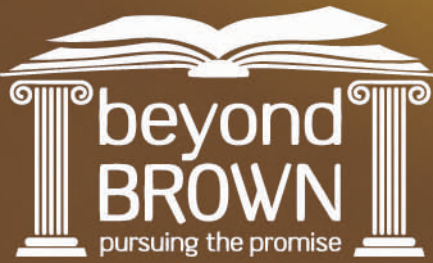
5. What are the percentages of students from each group who receive special education services?

African Americans: 15%

Asians: 6%

Latinos: 11%

Whites: 11%



Name: _____ Date: _____

What Makes a Great School?

Directions: As the results of class voting are tabulated, record the top ideas for each topic below. This will give you an overall list of the attributes and programs you and your classmates think a “great” school includes.

Building and Facilities (overall learning environment, student safety)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Classes/Courses (what is offered and how it is taught)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Technology (not just computers, but all types of technology)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Staffing (qualifications, teaching styles, number of students per class)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Other (any other ideas not included in previous categories)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.