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Student Power: Effective Citizenship

Student Power

Effective Citizenship

Mrs. Asiah Wolfolk-Manning, Esq.
awolfolk@dadeschools.net
Miami Carol City Senior High School
School Code: 7231

For more information concerning ideas with IMPACT opportunities including Adapter and Disseminator grants, please contact:
The Education Fund
305-558-4544, Ext.113
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STUDENT POWER OVERVIEW

Student Power is a project that can be done at any grade level, but will especially work great in middle school and high school to teach the importance of civic engagement. Students will research a topic, identify a public policy related issue, and propose a new policy or a change in policy.

As a class, students will learn the difference between public policy and community involvement. They will research and examine issues that affect their local community, state, and/or the nation. One goal is for students to understand how the different branches of government and citizens work together to create laws and affect change. As a result of their research, they will select a topic to conduct more in-depth research and propose a policy solution for a particular issue. Students will meet with government officials, conduct interviews, and produce a product to show their efforts.

Student Power is a great way to increase student engagement. For each project, the students improved their research, writing, and presentation skills. During the first year, my seniors had just completed their voter awareness presentations prior to going on COVID shutdown. While they were supposed to present to their peers in-person, we were forced to regroup and find an alternative way to use the information and spread awareness. As a result, they attended several virtual meetings with a representative from *My School Votes* and began to attend meetings with *When We All Vote*, a nonpartisan initiative created by Michelle Obama. They used their social media platforms and participation in group chats to spread the message re: voting. I really credit the Student Power project for helping us to finish the school year strong in the midst of a pandemic.

Likewise, the students' participation in Student Power for the next year was incredible. We were primarily remote the entire year. There were students who did few other assignments, but always turned in the assignments for Student Power. As their final product, the students compiled a 40+ slide show of their findings and interviews with legal professionals. As a class, they delivered their Power Point presentation to two different classes and engaged in a class discussion, after each. After both projects, the students have a much deeper understanding of government, how policy is created, the importance of civic engagement, and how they can get involved now.

STUDENT POWER OBJECTIVES

Student Power is an opportunity for students connect theory and textbook information with real-world application. It is a student-led project that demonstrates how students can affect change and make a difference in real time. Working on the project will challenge your students to think on a deeper level and consider their own beliefs and positions in a way they haven't done before. The research only enhances their critical thinking and analytical skills. Working together as a class will push independent learners to move beyond their comfort level and see the benefits of cooperative learning.

Many of the seniors who completed Student Power were able to vote in the 2020 elections. Several of them were deeply motivated by the work they had done and actually sent pictures of their voter registration card and "I Voted" sticker. The juniors had to take the U.S. History EOC. While completing their Student Power Project, they had to brief (IRAC) cases and engaged in the very kinds of civic engagement they were studying in their class.

Student Power offers a glimpse of what is to come at the next level. In essence, it is a lesson in life!

STUDENT POWER GOALS

- Help students understand how government works
- Increase awareness of social and public policy issues
- Recognize the importance of checks and balances in government
- Enhance research, analytical, and critical thinking skills
- Teach students how to contact policy decisionmakers
- Allow students to work collaboratively and cooperatively
- Encourage problem solving and analytical reasoning
- Promote the importance of civic engagement
- Empower students to use their voices to bring about change
- Build student confidence in writing and public speaking

LEARNING STANDARDS

FL Standards:

SS.4.C.2.2 Identify ways citizens work together to influence government and help solve community and state problems.

SS.7.C.3.4 Identify the relationship and division of powers between the federal government and State Governments.

SS.A.1.4.3. The student evaluates conflicting sources and materials in the interpretation of a historical event or episode.

SC.68.CS-PC.3.5 Identify resources such as city, state, and federal government websites and explain that they can be used for communication between citizens and governments.

SS.912.C.1 : Demonstrate an understanding of the origins and purposes of government, law, and the American political system.

SS.912.C.1.1 Evaluate positions on the founding ideals and principles in American Constitutional government

SS.912.C.2 : Evaluate the roles, rights, and responsibilities of United States citizens and determine methods of active participation in society, government, and the political system.

SS.912.C.2.4 Evaluate, take, and defend positions on issues

SS.912.C.2.5 Conduct a service project to further the public good

SS.912.C.2.8 Analyze the impact of citizen participation as a means of achieving political and social change. Evaluate the roles, rights, and responsibilities of United States citizens and determine methods of active participation in society, government, and the political system.

SS.912.C.2.10 Monitor current public issues in Florida

SS.912.C.2.11 Analyze public policy solutions or courses of action to resolve a local, state, or federal issue

SS.912.C.2.14 Evaluate the processes and results of an election at the state or federal level

SS.912.C.3.10 Examine the significance and outcomes of landmark Supreme Court cases

SS.912.C.3.13 Illustrate examples of how government affects the daily lives of citizens at the local, state, and federal levels

SS.912.C.3.15 Examine how power and responsibility are distributed, shared, and limited by the Constitution

SC.68.CS-PC.3.5: Identify resources such as city, state, and federal government websites and explain that these resources can be used for communication between citizens and government.

LAFS.68.RH.1.3: Identify key steps in a text's description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).

LAFS.1112.RI.3.8: Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S. texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning (e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court majority opinions and dissents) and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy (e.g., The Federalist, presidential addresses).

SS.912.A.1.2: Use research and inquiry skills to analyze American history using primary and secondary sources.

SS.912.W.1.3: Interpret and evaluate primary and secondary sources.

LAFS.910.RST.3.8: Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author's claim or a recommendation for solving a scientific or technical problem.

LAFS.7.RI.1.3: Analyze the interactions between individuals, events, and ideas in a text (e.g., how ideas influence individuals or events, or how individuals influence ideas or events).

SC.68.CS-CS.1.3: Evaluate what kinds of real-world problems can be solved using modeling and simulation.

MAFS.K12.MP.1.1: Make sense of problems and persevere in solving them by: Reporting the number of observations. Describing the nature of the attribute under investigation, including how it was measured and its units of measurement. Giving quantitative measures of center (median and/or mean) and variability (interquartile range and/or mean absolute deviation), as well as describing any overall pattern and any striking deviations from the overall pattern with reference to the context in which the data were gathered. Relating the choice of measures of center and variability to the shape of the data distribution and the context in which the data were gathered.

LAFS.910.W.2.6/ LAFS.1112.W.2.6: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information

CTE-MKT.68.GENRI.1207 Use appropriate social media sites and online portfolios

LAFS.K12.W.3.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject.

LAFS.1112.WHST.3.9: Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. SC.68.CS-CP.3.2: Create online content (e.g., webpage, blog, digital portfolio, multimedia), using advanced design tools

MAFS.6.SP.2.5: Summarize numerical data sets in relation to their context, such as by: Reporting the number of observations. Describing the nature of the attribute under investigation, including how it was measured and its units of measurement. Giving quantitative measures of center (median and/or mean) and variability (interquartile range and/or mean absolute deviation), as well as describing any overall pattern and any striking deviations from the overall pattern with reference to the context in which the data were gathered. Relating the choice of measures of center and variability to the shape of the data distribution and the context in which the data were gathered.

SS.912.S.2.9: Prepare original written and oral reports and presentations on specific events, people, or historical eras.
LAFS.1112.W.1.1 Write arguments to support claims using valid reasoning

LAFS.1112.W.2.5 Develop and strengthen writing through rewriting, revision, editing, and proofreading

LAFS.1112.W.2.6 Use technology to publish and produce individual and/or shared writing products

LAFS.1112.SL.2.4 Present information, findings, and supporting evidence with a clear line of reasoning and opposing perspectives

LAFS.1112.W.3.8 Gather relevant information from authoritative sources and assess the validity of each source

Understanding the Difference Between Public Policy and Community Service?

vs.

LESSON PLAN 1 (see pg. 17 for additional lesson)

Objective: **To help students distinguish between public policy and community service**

- Community service is often related to an issue impacting citizens in negative way
- Community service may involve volunteering or providing assistance to help resolve a problem or meet a need
- Community service does NOT involve the government, regulations, or laws
- Public policy REQUIRES the involvement of government to bring about change via law, regulations, or policies
- If public policy is not followed, there is a consequence

Example: If the local park is riddled with trash, a group of students getting together to do a park clean up on Saturday is community service. Public policy happens when the students request the city to pass a law to fine or cite anyone littering in the park.

Sample Introduction

Turn on the news! Listen to the radio! Look around you! Whether it involves discrimination, equal rights, or passing legislation for stricter gun laws, there are issues being discussed and debated. They are real and important. Even if none of the above issues affect you, SOMETHING DOES.

- *What do you care about?*
- *What is one problem in your community that needs to be resolved?*
- *Who has the power to resolve it?*
- *How can you get the attention of those in power?*

Directions: Students will create a chart to identify issues that matter to them. For each problem, they will identify existing public policy and how they can help (community service).

1 - Have students to brainstorm global/national issues, state issues, and local issues that matter to them.

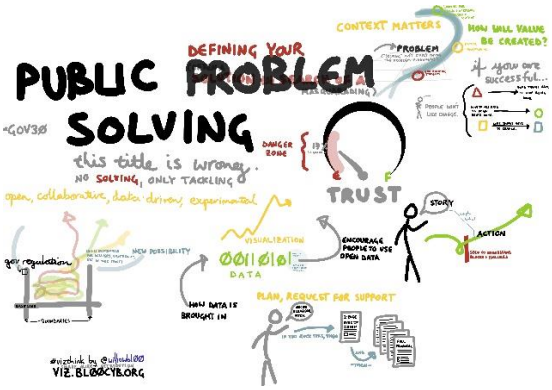
2 – Next to each issue, have them write any amendments, statutes, or laws designed to solve the problem

3 – Next to the law, have them identify what they can personally do to help resolve the problem

4 – Allow students to discuss their charts with a partner. Then, allow time to share out as a class.

ISSUE	COMMUNITY SERVICE (HOW I HELP)	PUBLIC POLICY (LAW / GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT)
Local park is being trashed	Neighborhood clean-up	$500 fine for littering in the park
People speeding in cars near schools	Post signs asking people to slow down	State passes a law that the limit for driving in a school zone is

Identifying the Problem



LESSON PLAN 2

Objective: **To select a problem for which the students can research and propose a public policy solution**

- The problem should be broad enough to allow sufficient research but narrow enough to resolve through policy
- Allow students to vote on the problem and select an alternate or second option
- Help students to see how the problem relates to them and/or the community around them
- Be sure to brainstorm possible solutions prior to settling on the problem to ensure a policy solution is feasible
- Prior to the lesson, model how to answer the questions by using a school rule and working backwards to help students see how it became a rule and why
- Pre-assign roles / tasks / questions to ensure all group members share the work
- Based on the group presentations, students will have a better idea of which problems can be resolved without government and which need government intervention

Directions: Using the exercise from Lesson Plan 1, have students to select the problem for which they will research. You can divide this lesson into several smaller lessons.

**Review Lesson 1 with students*

1 – Divide students in groups of 3-4 students (based on class size)

2 – As a group, have students select one problem from the chart they created in the previous lesson

3 – As a group, students will answer the questions below. You will need to give them some guidance on how to conduct research to find the answers.

- Why is the issue a problem? Why is it significant?
- Who is harmed or potentially harmed by the problem?
- What are the potential consequences if the problem is not resolved?
- What can be done to fix the problem? (possible solutions)
- Who has the power to create policy to change it?

4 – If possible, give students chart paper on which to answer their questions (can also be done using Power Point / Sway)

5 – Allow each group to share the problem they selected and present the information to the class

6 – Once all groups have presented, have students vote on the top (2) choices on which to do the project

7 – Select the topic which affords the best option to actually create public policy.

8 – As a class work on developing 3-4 possible ways to resolve the problem AND write out an actual sentence or paragraph describing the proposed policy

9 – For each possible solution, have students consider and discuss the following:

- What must happen to bring about the proposed change
- Who are the appropriate government officials / agencies to resolve the problem
- What are the anticipated obstacles (i.e. money, resources needed to support the change) to having the proposed policy approved
- How can you overcome the obstacles

THE RESEARCH

LESSON PLAN 3

Objective: **To gather information about the problem, possible solutions, and the people who make policy**

- Research should include information from multiple sources, including but not limited to books, internet, and interviews
- Seek potential guest speakers early AND submit paperwork for approval early
- Each student should be able to explain the problem and what the class hopes to accomplish with the project
- Plan to teach students how to find credible sources and how to properly cite information for different sources
- Remind students to write source information PRIOR to taking notes from the source
- Model where to find source information on a website and what to do if certain info is missing (date / author) from the site
- Give students guidance on the type of questions that will illicit the information they need if conducting interviews
- Allow students to conduct mock interviews prior to an assigned interview or meeting with a guest speaker
- Need to cover the following aspects: *The Problem, Interviews, Class Policy, Alternate Policy, Informing Others, Constitutionality*

Directions: You may allow students to work in the same groups they worked in for Lesson 2, if feasible.

1 – Divide students in groups of 3-4 students (based on class size)

2 – Assign each group one aspect of the project (You may assign more than one group to an aspect), if necessary:

The Problem

- Minimum (2) essays explaining why this problem is important, the reason we selected it as a class, and the governmental agencies or branches of government involved
- Include important cases, facts, and statistics
- Show RESEARCH – include graphs, charts, supporting documentation from other states who have resolved similar issue (if possible)
- Works Cited Page

Interviews

- Need to interview people who make policy or have knowledge of issue (government officials, attorneys, legislators, experts, and/or victims)
- At least one guest speaker should be a government official, policy maker, or legal professional
- Students will develop a set of 8-10 questions to ask re: problem, ways to resolve, and challenges

Class Policy

- One page essay explaining a proposed policy to resolve the problem

  - Why is this problem significant?
  - Who is or will be harmed / negatively impacted by the problem?
  - Facts and statistics to support the need for change
  - What must happen to bring about the proposed change?
  - Who are the appropriate government officials / agencies to resolve the problem?
  - What are the anticipated obstacles (i.e. money, resources needed to support the change) to having the proposed policy approved?
  - How can you overcome the obstacles?

- Have students refer to previous lesson and class discussion for assistance

Alternate Policies

- Students will select 1-2 of the proposed policies discussed in previous lesson
- One page essay explaining the proposed policy AND why it isn't a viable option
  - Why is this problem significant?
  - Who is or will be harmed / negatively impacted by the problem?
  - Facts and statistics to support the need for change
  - What must happen to bring about the proposed change

- Who are the appropriate government officials / agencies to resolve the problem?

- What are the anticipated obstacles (i.e. money, resources needed to support the change) to having the proposed policy approved?

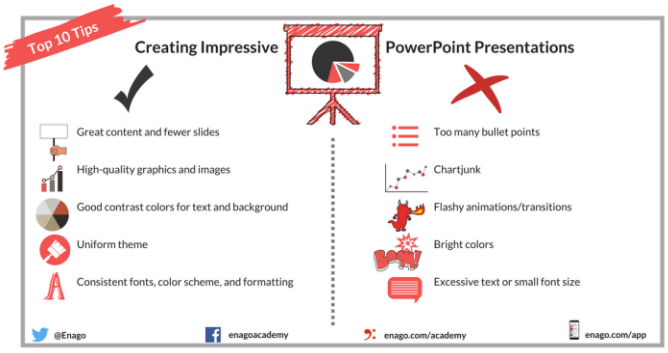
Informing Others

- Develop a plan to bring awareness to issue / proposed public policy
- Social media campaign
- Emails / letters to lawmakers
  - May have entire class write emails / letters
  - Use template to provide students guidance
- Distribute surveys via link to classes to gather research on students' awareness (Google, Survey Monkey)
- Class presentations throughout the school / select teachers
  - Can be done as part of the research process
  - Can also be done at the end to present the portfolio

Constitutionality

- Must address whether the policy violates any rights in U.S. Constitution
- May choose to include case law that supports policy
- See WORKSHEET at the end (pg. 21-22)

PRESENTING THE PORTFOLIO



Lesson Plan 4

Objective: **To present the research and formally propose public policy to government officials who make policy decisions**

- Portfolios can be digital (Power Point, Sway) or printed in a binder
- Use consistent fonts that are easy to read and clear graphics
- Allow the students to create a catchy, appropriate title
- Include pictures from interviews and/or guest speakers
- Review portfolio requirements and presentation etiquette with students

Directions: The portfolio is comprised of all the work from the previous lesson.

1 – Decide if you will present a printed or digital portfolio

2 – Have students submit their portfolio in the approved format by a specific date

3 – Give specific instructions regarding font type, size, color, and graphics

4 – Arrange for students to present their research (portfolio) to the school via classroom presentations or a larger assembly

5 – Hold several practice presentations in class to ensure each student is well versed on what to say during the presentation

6 – If possible, arrange for students to present their research (portfolio) to government official who makes policy decisions regarding the selected problem 😊

RESOURCES / WORKSHEETS

Center for Civic Education. *Project Citizen Level 2*. 2nd ed., Center for Civic Education, 2010.

www.flsenate.gov

https://www.civicplus.com/blog/ce/what-does-civic-engagement-mean-for-local-government

https://www.civiced.org/project-citizen/resources

http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/index.cfm?submenu=3

https://www.uopeople.edu/blog/ultimate-student-guide-to-finding-credible-sources/

https://www.icivics.org/curriculum/persuasive-writing

https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/education-surveys/

https://www.myfloridahouse.gov/sections/representatives/myrepresentative.aspx

https://www.miamidade.gov/global/government/commission/home.page

https://www.civiced.org/digitalPortfolio/

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1blh9K0-KfKEvAX_w8U21i8xVWDqAiOs4wUKXDST0ZS4/edit?pli=1#slide=id.p

FORM 2

CREATING PUBLIC POLICY AND CIVIL SOCIETY SOLUTIONS TO COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

Read the first example of a community problem shown in the middle column below and the examples of (1) a public policy solution to the problem by a government institution acting with or without civic society and (2) a solution to the problem solely by civil society. Then fill out the rest of the chart with your own suggestions for public policy and civil society solutions to the problems noted. Use the last space to identify a problem in your community and give examples of public policy and civil society solutions for it. After you have come up with your responses, share them with your group members or classmates.

PUBLIC POLICY SOLUTION	COMMUNITY PROBLEMS	CIVIL SOCIETY SOLUTION
City officials fund a program to give needy individuals vouchers to use to "buy" food and clothing from participating merchants	Poor families in the community need food and adequate clothing	Members of a civic organization conduct a drive to collect food and clothing and then distribute it to the needy
	School-aged children are out on the streets late at night	
	Parents are not using child protective car seats properly	
	The lake in the community is polluted and filled with litter	
	Owners of a professional football team want to build a stadium in the city	
	Many local high school students have been cheating on homework and tests	

FORM 3

INTERVIEW REPORT FORM

Your name _____

Before beginning the interview be sure to identify yourself and briefly explain the problem you are researching, why you chose to research this problem, and why you are conducting this interview. Before beginning, ask the person's permission to use her or his name. If a person does not wish to be named, respect her or his privacy and indicate only the person's role in the community.

1 Name and title of person being interviewed

_____

_____

2 The person's role in the community (e.g., parent, community volunteer, business person, retired person)

_____

_____

3 Explain the problem you are studying to the person you are interviewing.

_____

_____

_____

_____

4 Use the following questions in conducting the interview. Write or record the answers you receive.

a Do you think the problem I have described is important? Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

b Do you think others in our community believe this is an important problem? Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

c What might be the cause or causes of the problem?

_____

_____

_____

_____

d Do you think this is a problem that should be dealt with by

- government acting alone? Why or why not?

- government with the assistance of civil society? Why or why not?

- government with the assistance of the private sphere? Why or why not?

- government with the assistance of civil society and the private sphere? Why or why not?

e What policy, if any, is already in place to deal with this problem?

f If a policy does exist, ask the following questions.

- What are the advantages of this policy?

- What are the disadvantages of this policy?

- How might the policy be improved?

- Does it need to be replaced? Why?

- What disagreements about this policy, if any, exist in our community?

g If there is no policy currently in place to deal with the problem, ask the following questions.

- What sort of policy do you think might be needed to address the problem?

- What level(s), branch(es), or agency(ies) of government are responsible, or should be responsible, for dealing with the problem?

5 Do you have any suggestions for where I might get more information about this problem and the different positions people take on the problem?

FORM 11

CONSTITUTIONAL OPINION FORM

1 OUR PROPOSED POLICY SERVES THE FOLLOWING PURPOSES OF GOVERNMENT

Securing the rights of individuals
Establishing justice
Providing for security and public order
Protecting the people from harm
Providing for the general welfare

Explain

2 OUR PROPOSED POLICY RESPECTS THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

The right to freedom of religion
The right to freedom of expression
The right to due process of law
The right to privacy
The right to equality of opportunity

Explain

3 Government is not allowed to interfere with a person's freedom of belief. Our proposed public policy (does/does not) violate this limit on the power of government. Explain why.

4 Government is not allowed to place unreasonable and unfair limits on a person's right to express him- or herself in speech, writing, or by other means. Our proposed public policy (does/does not) violate this limit on the power of government. Explain why.

5 Government is not allowed to take a person's life, liberty, or property without giving that person a fair hearing in a court of law or before another authorized agency of government. Our proposed public policy (does/does not) violate this limit on the power of government. Explain why.

6 Government is not allowed to invade the privacy of a person's home without a very good reason for doing so. Our proposed public policy (does/does not) violate this limit on the power of government. Explain why.

7 Government is not allowed to make laws that unreasonably or unfairly discriminate against people on the basis of race, religion, age, ethnic group (national origin), or gender. Our proposed public policy (does/does not) violate this limit on the power of government. Explain why.

Summary Statement

Write a summary statement in which you support your belief that your proposed public policy does not violate the Constitution or interfere with these rights.

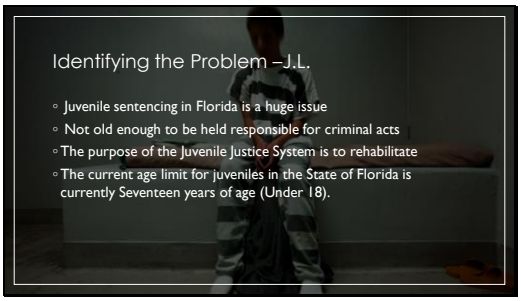
STUDENT POWER SAMPLE TIMELINE

Week 1	• Introduce the project • Discuss the importance of civic engagement • Review branches of government and what each does
Week 2	Complete Lesson 1
Weeks 3 and 4	Complete Lesson 2 • Schedule potential guest speakers / interviews • Submit paperwork for guest speakers
Week 5	• Reviewing research skills • Model how to cite information • Review interviewing techniques
Weeks 6 and 7	Begin Lesson 3 • Possible guest speakers • Possible interviews • Schedule presentation to policy decision maker (if desired)
Week 8	• Group conferences (meet w/each group) • Assess challenges / progress
Weeks 9 and 10	Complete Lesson 3 • Attend government meeting • Class presentations (if desired)

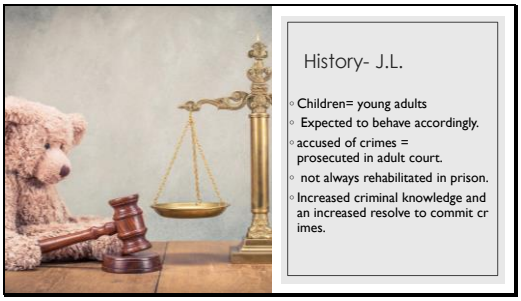
Weeks 11 and 12	**Begin Lesson 4 (working on Portfolio)**
Week 13	**Complete Portfolio**
Week 14	**Continue Lesson 4 (working on Presentation)**
Week 15	**School and/or Class Presentations**
Week 16	**Present to Government Official / Policy Decision Maker**

Slide 1

Slide 2



Slide 3



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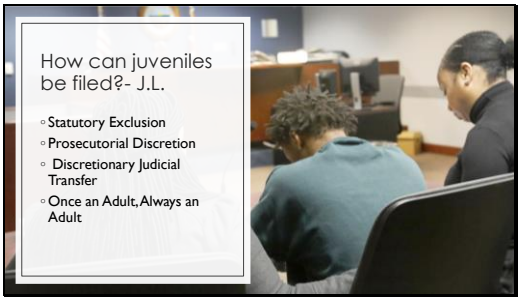

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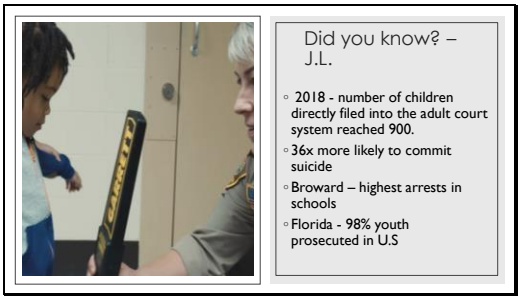

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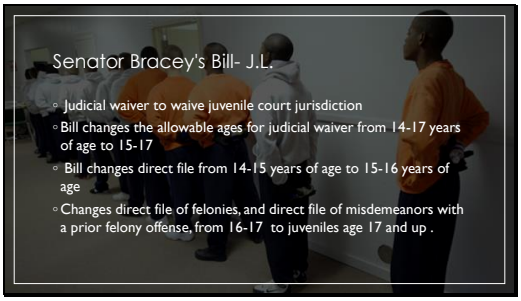

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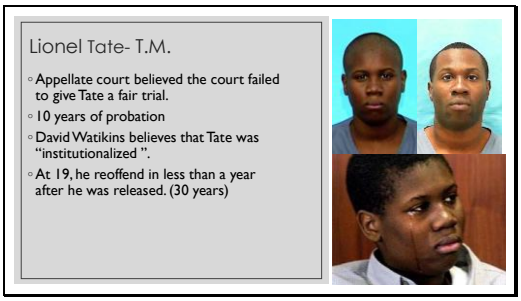

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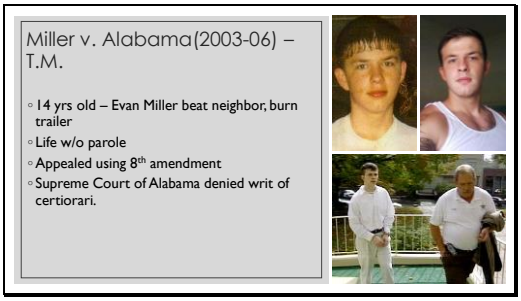
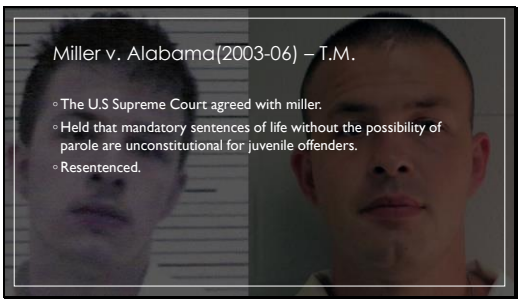


Slide 10



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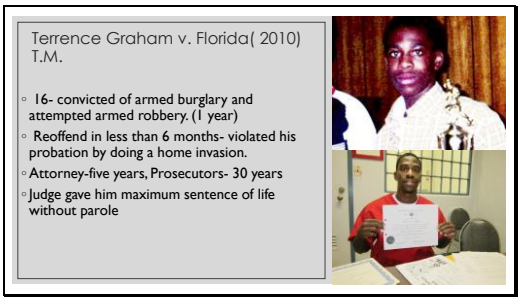

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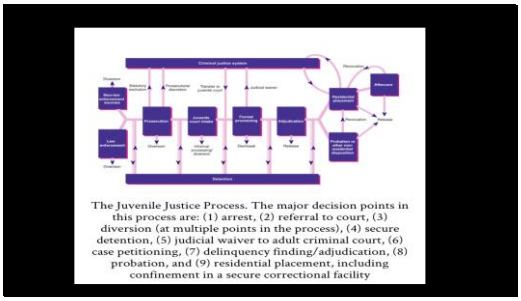
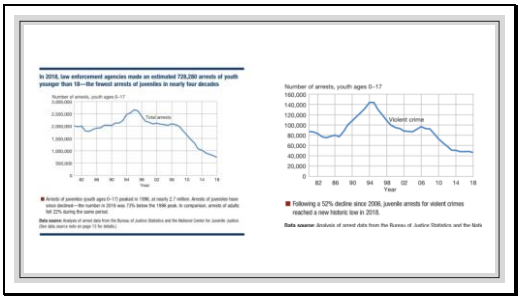


The Juvenile Justice Process. The major decision points in this process are: (1) arrest, (2) referral to court, (3) diversion (at multiple points in the process), (4) secure detention, (5) judicial waiver to adult criminal court, (6) case petitioning, (7) delinquency finding/adjudication, (8) probation, and (9) residential placement, including confinement in a secure correctional facility

Slide 14



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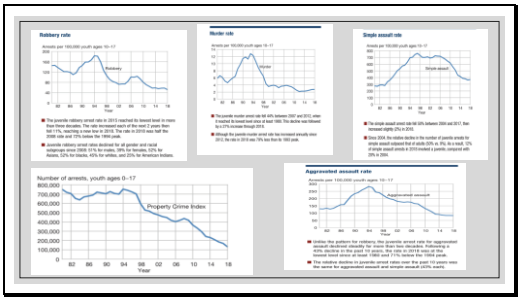

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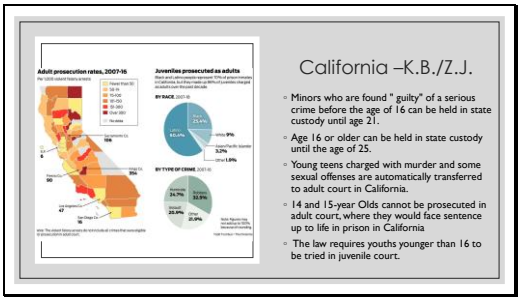

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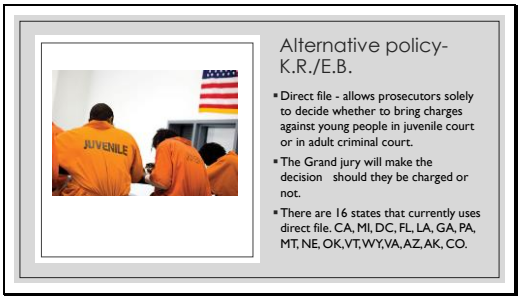

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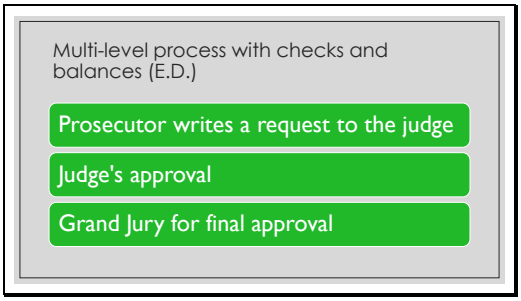

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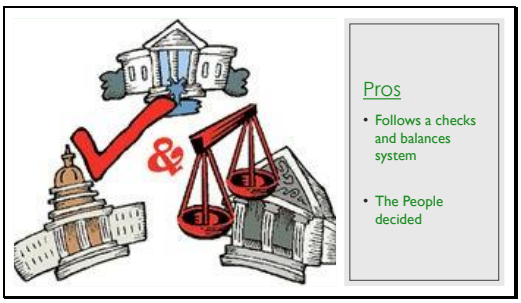

Pros

- Follows a checks and balances system
- The People decided

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Cons

- Costs extra money
- Time consuming

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Class Policy- I.S.

- Support Senate Bill 474
- Raise the minimum age for direct file to 14
- Legislative Meeting from Flsenate.gov Criminal Justice Committee – 3/23/21
- Viewed on 4/7/21 (not related to SB474)

Senate Committee on Criminal Justice Meeting

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Class Policy- I.S.

Why do we support SB 474?

- Juveniles of color - twice as likely to be tried or prosecuted as adults
- Deserve rehabilitation opportunities
- Juveniles should be given another chance at life, to learn from their mistakes
- Supported the bill by sending out emails, letters
- Wanted to do social media (#SupportSB474)

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Meeting w/Judge Tanya Brinkley

- February 5, 2021 @ 11:00 a.m.
- Topics discussed
  - How she became a judge
  - Most rewarding and challenging aspects of job
  - Why she chose law
  - What youth can do to get involved in civic engagement

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Meeting w/Elected Official

- March 4, 2021 @10:45 a.m.
- Class meeting w/Vice-Chairman, Oliver Gilbert via Zoom
- Topics discussed
  - Difference b/w being Mayor vs. County Commissioner
  - Why choose a career in politics
  - How youth can get involved in civic engagement
  - Using virtual juries in civil and criminal justice system

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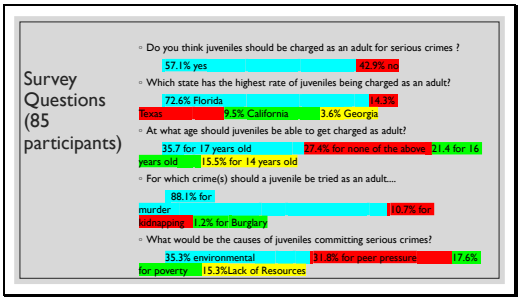

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STUDENT POWER TIPS / REMINDERS

⚖ Allow students to select the topic / problem which most interests them

⚖ Guide them toward a topic / problem for which they can find sufficient information

⚖ Brainstorm guest speakers, government officials, or key leaders early

⚖ Submit required paperwork early for guest speaker approval with designated personnel and/or administration

⚖ Dignitaries (elected officials / high ranking personnel) require special approval; be sure to state it specifically on your request

⚖ Consider inviting more than one speaker at a time, just in case one cancels

⚖ If you have more than one speaker, you can have speakers come in shifts or create a panel

⚖ Ask your Activities Director, magnet leader, academy leader, and administrators about community partnerships

⚖ Divide students into well-rounded groups and play to their strengths when assigning tasks

⚖ Give students a timeline and post deadlines frequently

⚖ Coordinate with your testing chair and activities director to ensure there are no conflicts with major activities and testing dates

⚖ Remember to have students turn in media release forms and take pictures throughout the project