



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2018 Volume I: Race, Class and Punishment

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## **Ancient Law Codes to School Discipline: Is it Justice for All?**

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by Sara Mingione

When we look at the first development of civilization in Mesopotamia, we see the beginnings of justice in a society. Hammurabi implemented his law code to protect the citizens and create order in one of the first empires. His main focus for his law codes was justice for his people after responding to their complaints. What is often difficult for students, especially in middle school, is to make connections from what they are learning in ancient history to today. This unit serves as a way for students to analyze the significance of Hammurabi's Law Code, but to also think about our discipline system in schools and why students misbehave. Dismantling the school-to-prison-pipeline starts in our schools. By implementing positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) and restorative justice practices, we can help keep our students in schools. Students who are at-risk and have experienced trauma, perform lower than their peers and are suspended and disciplined at much higher rates. Teaching students how to analyze why we have behavior issues in schools and what are some possible solutions will allow them to advocate for their own success. This unit not only challenges students to think about our discipline system, but it also challenges teachers and administrators to implement restorative practices to keep students in school and prevent behavior issues in the future.

(Developed for Social Studies, grade 6; recommended for Social Studies: Ancient Civilizations, grade 6, and Language Arts: Argument, grades 6-8)

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