



UBI (Universal Basic Income): Yay! We Don't Have to Work Anymore?

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Content Objectives

Introduction- Welcome to the World of UBI!

Imagine that you woke up one morning and found that the federal government deposited \$1,000 into your checking account. You didn't ask for it; you didn't apply for it. It was just there. Sweet, right? What would you do with that \$1,000? Would you use it to buy groceries? Maybe pay some bills? Go on a small vacation? Replace worn household furniture you've been meaning to get rid of? To most people, \$1,000 is not an inconsequential amount of money- things can be done with that kind of cash!

Now imagine that you knew that these types of payments would be made regularly, meaning that next month, another \$1,000 would be deposited into your account. And the same thing would happen the month after that, and the month after that. By the end of the year, you will have received \$12,000 from the government, tax-free, and with no conditions attached on how you could spend the money. For planning purposes, how would your life change in response to this windfall? Would you quit your job? Would you work less hours? Would you use this financial cushion to apply for better paying jobs, or use the money to pay for education or job training? Or would you refuse the money on principle? Is your life better off, or the same, or worse with this money?

Though the idea of getting "free" money from the government for basic living expenses is not a new idea, it has recently garnered more academic and public attention due to a global pandemic and the imminent inevitability that automation and machine learning will significantly shrink the future workforce (robots will take our jobs!). This economic policy of "free" government money is called UBI, or Universal Basic Income, and proponents have argued that such a policy will soon be necessary to act as a safeguard to ensure individual basic needs are met.

Audience and Unit Overview

This unit, titled "UBI (*Universal Basic Income*): Yay! We Don't Have to Work Anymore?" is written to be taught to my 12th grade ERWC (Expository Reading and Writing Course) class at Apollo High School, an alternative education school in the East Side Union High School District in San Jose, California. Students at Apollo did not

find traditional academic success at their comprehensive sites, and most of its student body come to the school below grade level for reading, writing, and math. The student body also overwhelmingly identifies Latin(x), and 80%+ live below the poverty level and qualify for free or reduced lunch.

This unit would have my 12th grade ERWC class explore the viability of implementing a universal income program in the United States, specifically focusing on what UBI is, and its relevance and significance to their lives. The unit will be focused on the essential question, “What is Universal Basic Income, and should it be implemented in the United States?”

Students will first explore what UBI is, its history, and why proponents and critics either like or dislike the policy. Students will also explore significant ways in which our world has been changing, which comprise the core reasons why many believe the United States should implement a UBI policy (UBI as an alternative to welfare; pandemics and market crashes; automation). During this unit, students will also study the widening global wealth gap, how wealth is distributed in other political systems, as well as examining how wealth influences our politics at the federal level.

To gauge student understanding, students will 1) research and write a five paragraph expository essay exploring the topic of UBI; and 2) engage in an role-defined Socratic Seminar on the statement, “The United States should immediately implement a Universal Basic Income policy for its citizens.” This unit would be a cross curricular unit with Apollo’s US History curriculum on capitalism/socialism/communism, to help students make connections about the various ways in which wealth is redistributed under different political systems.

This issue of Universal Basic Income is especially relevant to Apollo’s demographics because most of the students who graduate from the school gravitate toward lower skilled jobs that automation and machine learning threaten to eliminate. Furthermore, an economic policy like UBI would make a substantial difference in the lives of the students and their families in alleviating some of the financial pressure they face because they live in one of the most expensive parts of the country. Thus, even though UBI deals with economic policy (which would charitably be called boring by most high school students) it is a timely and relevant topic that I believe students will find engaging.

With minor adjustments, I believe that this course can be adapted for other high school classes, notably US Government/Economics, Speech and Debate, or other ELA classes that can utilize the topic of UBI as a vehicle to learn and practice reading, research, writing, and oration skills.

Introduction to UBI- What The Heck is it Anyway?

Though the exact specifics of UBI programs can differ, in a nutshell, Universal Basic Income is a government economic policy where individuals (not households) are given money to help pay for basic needs such as food, housing, and utilities. This money is given tax free, with no oversight on how the money is spent. Receipt of UBI payments are not predicated on a person’s ability, fitness, or willingness to work, but programs can take into consideration a person’s age and residency requirements.¹ In the United States, many proposals for UBI revolve around \$1,000 per person per month, for a total of \$12,000 per year. Since poverty in the United States is defined as living under \$12,000 per year, a UBI program in the United States would theoretically eliminate living in extreme poverty.²

The idea of a Universal Basic Income as an economic floor for all Americans has been floating around American political and policy circles for over 50 + years. In 1962, Economist Milton Friedman advocated for an early iteration of universal income in the form of a negative income tax, where individuals who earn below a

certain amount will receive supplemental pay from the government rather than paying taxes to the government.³ Martin Luther King Jr. was also a supporter of a guaranteed basic income, declaring that such an income would go a long way in alleviating the economic injustices created by systemic racial inequities.⁴ In fact, the United States almost adopted a UBI program under President Nixon (who wanted every American family of four to have at least \$1,600 a year, equivalent to about \$10,000 today), but Nixon reportedly changed his mind at the last minute.⁵ Recently, the issue of UBI was brought back to the forefront of the American public consciousness by Andrew Yang, a 2020 presidential candidate who made his Freedom Dividend policy a central tenet of his campaign platform.⁶

Currently, no country has adopted a comprehensive UBI policy that would cover all of their citizenry, though a number of governments and organizations have dedicated funds to pilot smaller scale programs to gauge its potential effects. Theoretically, UBI does *not* take into consideration a person's level of income, but current pilot programs have only made UBI available to individuals and families of a lower socio-economic status. From a practical research design perspective, this makes sense. With only limited funds at their disposal, researchers can only study a small fragment of society for a short period of time. UBI is projected to have its greatest impact on those considered poor; so of course it makes sense to study UBI's impact on that demographic. Along these lines, proponents of limited UBI argue that UBI, when implemented, should only cover the neediest of society. Why not just give money to those who really need it?

However, in addition to being consistent with its namesake, many good arguments have been put forth for making UBI universal, including:

Fewer Transactional Costs and Reducing Bureaucratic Errors: Two closely related reasons for making UBI available to everyone is that there would be less bureaucracy needed to oversee the program, and less likelihood of bureaucratic exclusion or inclusion errors. Proponents of UBI have noted the difficulty for some of the poorest Americans to certify that they should be eligible for benefits, while others are gate-kept from benefits through systemic or de facto racism. If UBI is available to everyone, there would be no need for an army of bureaucrats to scrutinize application forms, resolve disputes, and monitor changing financial circumstances. Furthermore, bureaucratic and financial paperwork is confusing for some people- that's why some of us hire specialists to do them for us. By making UBI available to everyone, there would be no cases of people being mistakenly included in the program, or denied funds they would so badly need.⁷

Removes Stigma: Another reason for making UBI available to everyone regardless of income is that it removes the stigma from those who truly need it. Being on government assistance is not a badge of honor- most people would prefer not to advertise the fact if they were. Furthermore, as a point of pride, some people do all that they humanly can to avoid being on the dole. However, if UBI was made available to everyone regardless of financial status, there would be no shame or dishonor in receiving and using those funds for their intended purposes.⁸

Labor Market Compatibility: Finally, proponents argue that UBI should be dispensed regardless of income because it is more compatible with the existing labor market, namely that people will not turn down work in order to maintain benefit eligibility. Under our current system, there is a perverse incentive to not work in certain cases, where people are unwilling to accept low paying work because they will ultimately receive less money and benefits than if they were receiving unemployment.⁹ By dispensing UBI to everyone regardless of working status, people would theoretically be willing to take on work they otherwise would not have taken, which would result in a more robust economy and workforce.

UBI- What an Interesting Concept! Why Do We Need it? (Policy Arguments in Favor of UBI)

Arguments for UBI can be made from an ethically-responsible government perspective (humane governments should look out for its people's survival), or from a perspective that UBI is increasingly becoming a necessity because of how the world is changing.¹⁰ Arguments for UBI fall into three distinct categories, namely that UBI is necessary because: 1) It can be a strong alternative to welfare; 2) It is necessary in times of pandemics/market crashes; and 3) It is necessary due to automation taking over a significant number of jobs that used to be done by humans. Support for UBI is not limited to just scholars and futurologists. Highly successful hi-tech entrepreneurs have advocated for UBI in response to automation and as a means to more equally distribute wealth. Proponents of UBI point to economic and societal benefits that would derive from such a policy, including boost to GDP, increasing bargaining power of low-wage workers, and helping to create a happier and more just society.

Alternative to Other Forms of Welfare: Support for UBI does not fall only on the progressive end of the spectrum. Some proponents of UBI, such as prominent conservative scholar Charles Murray, take the position that UBI can be seen as a more sound and efficient economic policy toward the poor than the United States is currently pursuing. Murray believes that UBI can be funded by and used to supplant other forms of "welfare", including Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, food stamps, supplemental security income, housing subsidies, and things of that nature. Murray believes that every adult should be entitled to a \$12,000 UBI, \$2,000 of which must be spent towards health care, with the remaining \$10,000 to be spent however the recipient sees fit. For Charles Murray and other like-minded conservatives, their idea is that recipients are better placed than bureaucrats to determine the most beneficial use of aid money, so it is best to give people money and let them sort out how to use it.¹¹

Pandemics/Market Crashes: Some proponents of UBI argue that having a UBI program in place will help safeguard citizens in response to pandemics or market crashes. In this regard, the idea of enacting a UBI policy in the United States has already taken an important small step forward. As we are currently seeing right now, many Americans were unprepared financially for the COVID-19 pandemic. As states across the district issued shelter-in-place orders and advisories, many non-essential workers were let go, leaving many people who lived paycheck to paycheck in a difficult position. To help address this issue, under the 2 trillion dollar CARES Act, the federal government issued a \$1,200 stimulus for individuals making under \$75,000 per year.¹²

Unsurprisingly, the one-time stimulus was not a permanent fix. At the time of this writing, it has almost been half a year since shelter in place orders were issued, and the United States unemployment rate is comparable to that of the Great Depression. To alleviate the financial burden facing many Americans, Congress is looking at passing another, more sustained CARES Act. As Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif. explained, "Americans need sustained cash infusions for the duration of this crisis in order to come out on the other side alive, healthy, and ready to get back to work."¹³ Because some jobs may not come back after this crisis is over, extended cash infusions (such as UBI) may be an important policy for lawmakers and voters to consider to help keep money flowing through our economy, or to help jump start it once this crisis is over.

Automation: One of the main reasons why UBI is gaining traction among futurists and academics is that improvements in technology and artificial intelligence are increasingly making many blue (and white) collar jobs obsolete. And this is not some scenario that will happen in some distant future; it has been happening, and is continuing to affect our future workforce. As some commentators have noted:

“Robots and other related forms of artificial intelligence are rapidly supplanting what remains of factory workers, call-center operators, and clerical staff... We’ll soon be saying goodbye to truck drivers, warehouse personnel, and professionals who do whatever can be replicated, including pharmacists, accountants, attorneys, diagnosticians, translators, and financial advisors...”¹⁴

While some professions will be hit harder than others, analysts estimate that 47% of American jobs will be at risk, with a third of workers being pushed out of their chosen professions by 2030.¹⁵ And while it is possible for people to go back to school and retrain for another occupation, job data shows that a significant part of the workforce (primarily older and blue collar workers) end up opting to collect disability and drop out of the workforce altogether.¹⁶ In response, technological and industry leaders, like Elon Musk and Richard Branson, have both discussed the necessity of having a UBI program in place to help manage these industry side effects.¹⁷

Boost to GDP: Another projected benefit of implementing a UBI program are the economic benefits. People who have money spend money, and those who don’t have much to begin with (lower income) are more likely to spend their money in the near-term than their more moneyed counterparts. This naturally causes more demand for goods, which helps stimulate the economy. Economists who looked at a \$12,000 annual UBI per person proposal projected that the GDP would grow by 8% over a 12 year span.¹⁸ This greater demand for goods and services is projected to create a stronger job market as a result.

Increasing Bargaining Power of Workers: UBI also has implications for rebalancing opportunities for choice among low wage workers, namely that workers receiving UBI will have more bargaining power. It is easier to take advantage of workers who cannot afford to lose their jobs. Bills have to be paid regardless of employment status. However, if people have their basic necessities met through UBI, low wage workers will not be forced to accept any ill-fitting low paying job that presents itself. Instead, the reasoning goes, lower wage workers will accept work from a position of power, which could compel employers to increase wages, add benefits, and improve working conditions in order to retain their employees.¹⁹

Increasing Positivity and Mental Well-Being: Poverty is emotionally exhausting, and the stress can be overwhelming. UBI can help alleviate some of that stress by making sure that a person’s basic needs are taken care of. Countries and cities who have implemented pilot UBI programs have reported that participants characterize themselves as being happier with a more optimistic outlook on life. Some participants, instead of having to work their second job to help pay for expenses, were able to pursue their hobbies, take care of sick or elderly family members, spend time with their children, and continue their educations. Proponents of UBI, like Andrew Yang, believe that UBI enables people to go out and do good in the world, in his words, by increasing the human potential in social capital.²⁰

UBI Sounds Great! What’s the Catch? (Policy Arguments Against UBI)

However, support for Universal Basic Income is not universal. Some see it as a model of waste and unearned rewards. The arguments against implementing a UBI policy fall mostly into four broad categories: 1) Costs; 2) Its impact on the labor market; 3) The moral narrative of not rewarding the lazy or undeserving; and 4) Fears about automation are overblown.

Costs: One of the main arguments about implementing a UBI program in the United States is that it would be prohibitively expensive. Analysts estimate that a UBI program that pays every adult in the United States

\$1,000 per month would cost over \$3 trillion per year. For context, the current federal budget is around \$4 trillion.²¹ That money would have to come from somewhere, and policy planners are split about where that somewhere is. Money cannot just be “printed,” because that would just lead to inflation. This means that there somehow must be a redistribution of funds.

Proponents like Charles Murray argue that UBI can be funded by slashing all other welfare programs, which he considers costly and ineffective.²² However, others argue that such a proposal would actually leave poor people worse off than before, since a significant number of them would collect more benefits under the old system.²³ Proponents suggest that another source of funding could come from taxes, either those currently collected or from a new tax specifically aimed at automation.²⁴

In addition to the price tag, there can be other costs associated with implementing a UBI program. For example, a UBI that is considered too “generous” may entice people to immigrate to the United States in the hope of gaining a financial windfall. Furthermore, pro-business concerns warn that implementing a UBI will put increased wage pressure on employers, which will result in higher operating costs, with the difference being passed on to consumers.²⁵ And opponents warn that policymakers must be very careful when deciding whether or not to implement a UBI program. Once implemented, and once people become accustomed to receiving benefits, it may be difficult to get rid of the program once it embeds itself, similar to how Social Security in the United States and the National Health Service in Britain are untouchable.

Impact on the Labor and Goods Market: In addition to a prohibitively high price tag, critics have voiced concerns that UBI would encourage people to, at best, to become disincentivized to work more hours, or, in a worst case scenario, drop out of the labor force altogether.²⁶ This, in turn, would cause a tight goods market, where demand for goods (due to the new purchasing power of the monied masses), would outpace available supply from people leaving their jobs.

However, preliminary studies have indicated that receiving UBI does not make people drop out of the labor force. A study commissioned by MIT and Harvard looking at 7 UBI pilot programs found that cash transfers generally had no effect on people’s work behavior.²⁷ These findings shouldn’t be surprising; as conservative Charles Murray noted, \$10,000 is enough to cover general sustenance, but it is hardly enough to live a good life.²⁸ This does not only hold true in the United States; other countries that ran pilot UBI programs showed that cash transfers did not cause people to work less. However, certain segments of the population (small business owners), receiving UBI actually encouraged them to work more hours because additional capital allowed them to expand their businesses.²⁹ Basically, in theory, UBI will never disincentivize work that offers fair wages and working conditions.

Moral Narrative: Critics of UBI are also outraged over the perception that individuals would receive money for doing absolutely nothing. Someone has to pay for UBI, the argument goes, and industrious people do not want to support those too lazy to make their own way. As conservative Ben Shapiro noted, cutting a check will not solve the problem of poverty, because people will waste the money on frivolous things and not work. As a proponent of personal responsibility, Shapiro and like-minded supporters are appalled at the notion of UBI because they feel it creates perverse incentives for people to live irresponsibly and not make an honest living.³⁰ Furthermore, there is also a moral argument to be made to keep people working. Work is important, the argument goes, because many people derive their worth and dignity from work. It is better to teach men to fish rather than to just throw them leftover scraps from your own catch, because once the men accept the leftover scraps, they have relegated themselves to being second class citizens.³¹

However, in response to Shapiro's, proponents of UBI point to studies that show, when given money to help supplement their incomes, people don't tend to do "nothing," but rather use their time to help care for family members, engage in enriching hobbies that they otherwise could not have done, or volunteer in their communities.³²

Automation Fears Overblown: Finally, critics of UBI argue that fears about automation are not serious enough to warrant discussion about implementing a UBI program. Naval Ravikant, entrepreneur and co-founder of AngelList, argues that the threat of automation taking away jobs is nothing new, and has been occurring since the industrial revolution. When automation takes over jobs, he says, it frees up people to take on better and more creative jobs. Furthermore, the number of jobs is not finite; new jobs are created all the time. For example, 10 years ago, people would not have believed that people would be compensated very well for jobs like being a podcaster, video gamer (e-sport athlete), or someone who commentates on video games being played. And 10 years from now, people will be doing jobs that do not currently exist now.³³

Why Isn't UBI a Thing Already?

Though there is political and economic support across the spectrum for UBI, key differences in a number of vital areas hinder its momentum. For example, there are fundamental disagreements (some of which have already been touched upon) on some of the most basic and interrelated questions of UBI, including what should be the role of UBI, how much should people receive, and who should be eligible?

Role of UBI: One of the biggest points of disagreement among supporters of UBI is what role it should fulfill. Should UBI be given to everyone to help improve their standard of living? Or should UBI be given as an alternative to the current welfare system? Unsurprisingly for most, the answer seems to be split among party lines.

Progressive leaning proponents believe that UBI should be given as an additional benefit to help raise everyone's living standard, while conservative proponents would like to see UBI act as a replacement for our current welfare system. Progressive proponents believe that poor people will be worse off if UBI is funded by slashing welfare programs, since in some cases, portions of our indigent population may be eligible for more benefits under the current system than just \$1,000 per month.³⁴ Conservative proponents like Charles Murray believe that individuals who receive a \$1,000 UBI while holding a minimum wage job will live well above the poverty line, and that those who cannot work can get together with others in a similar situation and pool their resources together to raise their standard of living.³⁵

As a compromise, Andrew Yang's Freedom Dividend straddles both policies to reach what he sees as a happy medium. Yang describes his Freedom Dividend as an "opt in" type program. For those people who choose to opt in, they will be eligible for \$1,000 per month. However, by opting in, they will give up their right to any other sort of public assistance. The government would use these savings to help fund the program.³⁶ Yang believes that under this system, individuals can make a rational and informed choice under which program they would be better off. However, critics note that this format would not help the poorest percentile of Americans, and liken the program as a grant to the middle and upper class.³⁷

Amount of UBI: The amount of UBI that most economists and policy wonks float around is \$12,000, which is the poverty threshold in the United States.³⁸ However, some question whether or not a one size fits all approach would work. After all, there are significant regional differences when it comes to the cost of living. Would the current UBI amount work as effectively for someone in New York City as well as it could for

someone who lives in rural Arkansas? In addition, most UBI pilot programs in the United States have hovered around the \$500 per person per month mark, so there is no data on how people's lives and behaviors would change if they were given \$1,000 per month.

Eligibility: As discussed above, an essential part the name Universal Basic Income is the term *universal*, which denotes that this is a benefit that should be made available to everyone, regardless of their financial situation, work status, or other factors. However, there are supporters of guaranteed income who don't believe that these type of funds should be available to everyone. Instead, benefits would be means-tested, meaning that only those with lower incomes would be eligible. The theory behind having a means-tested guaranteed income rather than universal is that a basic income that is available to all would be prohibitively expensive, but also unnecessary. Does Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, or Jeff Bezos really need a UBI check? Of course not. In that case, to help keep costs down, it would be better to give a guaranteed income to the poor, and not to throw away money by giving it to those who do not need it.³⁹

However, as noted above, there are a number of good reasons to make UBI available to everyone. By making UBI universal, there will be fewer transactional costs in running the program, since we will not have a need for bureaucrats to verify and monitor the employment status and financial situation of UBI recipients. Furthermore, by making the program available to everyone, there is less chance that deserving people will be denied a guaranteed income, either through intentional or unintentional biases or errors in paperwork.⁴⁰ Finally, making a guaranteed income universal eliminates the stigma of those who receive it, by removing the shame of using UBI for its intended purpose of paying for basic essentials.⁴¹

Political Support: Finally, it is important to note that a crucial reason that the United States has not implemented a UBI policy is because there is currently not enough political support across the spectrum to pass or sustain such a program. In addition to the enormous fiscal cost, politicians on both sides of the aisle are reluctant to support a UBI program because a significant portion of their voter base are opposed to the very idea of giving individuals money "for free." Progressive politicians must be mindful of Union or Labor interests, which oppose UBI under the assumption that as the bargaining power of the individual increases, the capacity for collective efficiency of the union decreases.⁴² Conservative politicians, on the other hand, must be mindful of UBI because the idea of giving money to everyone, especially those that do not work, seems very un-American.⁴³

Have Any Countries Tried Implementing a UBI Program, and What Have They Learned?

At the time of this writing, a nationwide and comprehensive UBI is just a thought experiment. Though some nations and cities have implemented pilot programs to gauge its effects on quality of life and employment, all of the programs to date all fall short of being a true UBI program (small sample sizes, limited duration, targeting only specific demographics, and funds provided are insufficient to cover basic necessities). This is understandable, since there is not yet broad-based political or public support to fund a wide-ranging and permanent initiative. At the same time, the limited scope of past and current UBI experiments slightly undermines lessons and takeaways about how a comprehensive nationwide UBI would affect the economy and the labor market.

Finland: Finland implemented a two year government-run UBI program from January 2017 to December 2018, where 2,000 unemployed persons from around the country were given a tax-exempt basic income of 560 euros per month. This money was given regardless of any other income the individual may have had, and was also not affected by whether or not they were actively looking for work. The aim of the program was to study

how a basic income would affect a person's happiness, as well as their employment behavior.⁴⁴

Compared to the control group, the experimental group that received the monthly UBI payments reported better perceived economic security, satisfaction with their life, mental well-being, and were more optimistic about the future. However, there was no change to the employment rate for the UBI group as compared to the control group, though there was a small employment rate raise for the participants who had families. An interesting note is that the UBI group also measured as having more trust in other people and institutions in their society than the control group, which the researchers attributed to the basic income being given without condition.⁴⁵

Kenya: Kenya is currently in the middle of a long term UBI study, perhaps the most comprehensive to date. The program began in 2018, and is slated to run until 2028, and is affecting over 20,000 people spread out across a number of rural villages. Under the Kenyan experiment, villages are divided into 4 separate groups. The first group, a control group of 100 villages, will not receive any payments. The Long-Term UBI group of 44 villages will receive payments sufficient to cover basic needs (US \$0.75 per adult per day) for 12 years. The Short-Term UBI group of 80 villages will receive payments sufficient to cover basic needs (US \$0.75 per adult per day) for 2 years. The Lump Sum UBI group of 77 villages will receive a one-time payment that is equal to the amount that the short term group will receive, around US \$500.⁴⁶

Under this experiment, researchers will be measuring economic status changes, differences in how participants now spend their time, disposition towards risk-taking, female empowerment, and aspirations and outlook on life. Because the study is not yet concluded, it is difficult to draw final conclusions, but preliminary results show that the cash transfers have helped stimulate Kenya's economy. Furthermore, the benefits have not just accrued to villages that received the cash transfers- it is also benefiting people in nearby villages. Participant's psychological well-being appeared to improve, and there were no discernible inflation effects in the region.⁴⁷

Iran: Iran is another country that gives sizable cash-transfers to its citizens, though it is not quite considered a UBI program in the strictest sense. Since 2010, Iran has been giving its citizens the equivalent of US \$16,000 per year as a result of the government eliminating bread and energy subsidies. Iran's energy subsidies were eliminated because it was found to disproportionately give greater benefits to the rich, since the rich use far more fuel than the poor. Instead, by giving people an equal amount of money to pay for gas (rather than just making gas cheaper) everyone would receive the same benefit, and the populace would theoretically use less energy, which would be better for the environment.⁴⁸

Iran's cash transfer is sometimes not considered to be UBI because it was never intended to be provided to everyone, and was instead only intended to cover an increased cost of living due to the elimination of subsidies.⁴⁹ However, because over 90% of Iran's population receives the cash-transfer, it is nearly universal, and whether its program can truly be called UBI is just a matter of semantics.

One noteworthy concern about Iran's UBI was that it was initially viewed very negatively by the public and government, the rationale being that it made people lazy, and that people were dropping out of the labor force. However, investigators found no indications that the cash-transfers had affected the labor market or people's propensity to work. Young adults were not found to participate strongly in the labor force, but the researchers attributed pursuing higher education as the primary cause. A certain segment of the population (business owners) were actually found to work *more* hours, since the cash-transfers allowed them to make capital investments into their businesses with the intention of expansion.⁵⁰

Stockton, California: Some American cities have also begun experimenting with the idea of providing a UBI to its citizens. In 2018, under the leadership of Mayor Michael Tubbs, the Stockton Economic Empowerment Demonstration (SEED) program selected 125 residents from Stockton's low income neighborhoods who all earned less than Stockton's median annual income of \$46,000. Residents were given a debit card (so that spending could be tracked) that was loaded automatically with \$500 per month.⁵¹

Preliminary results from Stockton's UBI program have been promising. Tracking allowed the program planners to see how participants were spending their windfall, with 40% of the money being spent on food, 24% on merchandise from big box stores, 12% on utilities, and 9% on car repairs. There have also been some uplifting anecdotal stories as well, like of the story of a man who used the \$500 to take time off from his part-time job to interview for a full-time job, which he received. A significant portion of participants have reported feelings of reduced stress, fear, and anxiety, and well as feelings of stability. Tubbs believes that Stockton's SEED program illustrates that many people who are struggling is not because they are lazy, but because wages haven't kept up with inflation, and that the vast majority of people can be trusted to make good financial decisions.⁵²

Alaska: The United States also has been running a UBI-ish program since 1982 through Alaska's Permanent Fund Division (PFD). The way this works is that Alaska deposits 25% of the revenue it generates from its mines, oil, and gas reserves into the PFD. The PFD invests the money, and the interest earnings are then distributed to Alaskan residents (men, women, and children) every September. The checks are worth \$1,000 to \$2,000 depending on how well the investments did that year.⁵³

There have been a number of positive outcomes from Alaska's PFD program, but there have also been some unforeseen and unintended consequences as well. One of the brightest findings is that crippling poverty is no longer an issue in Alaska, with the PFD checks reducing poverty up to 20 percent. However, there are indications that the state's poorest residents may rely too heavily on the PFD checks, where a large check "can mean the difference between a year of hunger and a year of plenty."⁵⁴ Because everyone in the state is a beneficiary, it has in a way become untouchable, and its sacrosanct nature makes required changes difficult to implement. There are also concerns that Alaska's PFD has turned Alaskan politics into a single voter issue. Thus, one of the big takeaways from Alaska's story is that the United States must be careful about implementing a well-thought out and solvent UBI program should it decide to do so, because once implemented, it may be politically impossible to rescind.

UBI Pilot Program Conclusions and Qualifications: In summary, most of the preliminary findings for the pilot programs can be characterized as promising. Most people who received UBI payments strongly tended to use them for their envisioned purposes, such as food, utilities, car repair, and medical expenses. Fears that participants would waste their money on alcohol and drugs appear to be unfounded.⁵⁵

In addition, program participants in various regions were shown to have improved indicators of emotional well-being and lower feelings of stress, anxiety, and hopelessness. Anecdotally, it also allowed participants to engage in activities that helped their future employment prospects or helped enrich their lives, such as being able to transition from part-time work to full-time work, or to take care of family members. No programs reported an adverse effect on local labor markets or issues with inflation.

However, as touched upon above, even though there are encouraging signs that UBI improves the well-being of those who receive it, there are a number of reasons why it would be wise to take these findings with a grain of salt. Primarily, most of the above programs would not be considered a "true" UBI program. The limited

funds disbursed and duration of the projects do not provide an accurate basis to predict how economic and personal behaviors would have changed had the participants been given a more permanent and substantial income. In other words, because program participants knew that the experiment was only going to be in effect for a short amount of time, they knew that it would not be prudent to make changes to their lifestyle they may have been inclined to make if the benefits had been permanent.

Furthermore, it may be problematic to draw detailed and accurate conclusions from the above pilots because the programs only targeted a very small and specific demographic, low income individuals. Though the method varied in how participants were selected, participants had some things in common. The participants that were selected were either unemployed, drew unemployment benefits, were low income, or were living in poverty. Though UBI is projected to make the most substantial impact in improving the quality of life for the poorest segment of our population, how UBI will affect the middle class is still an important question. As of now, there is no data available on how UBI will impact the economic and labor decisions of the middle class.

Teaching Strategies

Apollo High School is located in East San Jose, California. Its student body overwhelmingly identifies as Latinx, and many students are classified as English Language Learners (ELL), meaning that English was not their first language. In addition, a large percentage of the study body tests below grade level for reading, writing, and math. As a result, they typically require specialized or modified instruction in order to help them succeed academically. To help teach my class this unit on Universal Basic Income, I will employ a number of teaching strategies to help make the concepts more understandable and easily accessible.

Direct Instruction with Multi-Modal Slides

Direct Instruction is a teacher-directed method where the teacher stands in front of the classroom and presents the information. Direct instruction is a useful strategy for *frontloading substantive information* at the beginning of a unit, or as a method for introducing academic or theoretical concepts. When most people think about how teachers teach students, this is the methodology they are thinking of.

However, studies have shown that while listening to a teacher talk about a subject can work for a certain segment of students, it does not work for others, and it is an especially ineffective way to reach and teach ELL students. But because direct instruction is a necessity for most educational models, researchers suggest it be *paired with other modalities of learning, such as text, pictures, or videos*.

In my case, in addition to preparing my direct instruction remarks, I make a Google Slides presentation for each unit. My Google Slides serve a number of purposes, including giving an *Explanation of Purpose* through our unit's Essential Questions, helping me *lay out a roadmap* of the major concepts and ideas I want to touch upon during the unit, and helping me *organize my thoughts ahead of the lecture*. The slides contain *bulleted text*, which the students can read during the direct instruction, and there are often *pictures or comics that help illustrate points* being made. These multiple modalities will help students access and comprehend this unit on UBI, and will also serve to help keep their interest in the material.

Daily Journal Warm Up (Student-Centered Learning and Informal Assessments)

At the beginning of every class, after completing our administrative and classroom items (roll call, daily agenda), my students are given a writing prompt to reflect upon and respond. Students are given 5-7 minutes to write on the prompt, which they will afterward share with their elbow partner before we transition into a whole class discussion. *Classroom warm-up activities* are shown to help students get into their learning mindsets, and also give teachers an opportunity to give students a glimpse on what the class will cover that day. For this unit, I will use my daily journals to have my students explore the different rationales for UBI, and give them a chance for them to access their prior knowledge on the subject.

I find my daily warmup of writing, pair sharing, and large group discussion to have a number of *student-centric* advantages. First, it gives my students the opportunity to practice *organizing their ideas* and *writing* them down, and allows them to reflect and make connections with the subject matter. Second, the pair share allows my students practice *articulating their ideas* and to gain confidence in expressing them. Finally, the whole class discussion allows students to hear different opinions and to learn from class insight.

There are also a number of advantages for me utilizing this warm-up setup. My Daily Journals often relate to the central question of our unit, so I am able to use them as a *scaffold* to break down their summative assessment into more easily understood parts. During my students pair sharing and whole class discussion, I am walking around and listening, using what I hear as an *informal assessment* to gauge their understanding. If students are confused or don't have the requisite prior knowledge about a topic, I can make sure to *elaborate* and take *more time explaining the material*.

Classroom Activities

Opening Lesson

The opening lesson will seek to explain the theoretical concept of UBI to my students, and to help them make connections about why the policy of UBI is important to them. In my class, students start off each class with a daily writing prompt. Students then have 2 minutes to pair share their writing with their elbow partners, and we conclude the warm up with a 5-7 minute class discussion. For the opening lesson, the writing prompt will be, "Imagine that the government gave you \$1000 a month with no strings attached. What would you do with that money? How would your life change? Would you still go out and find a job? Why or why not?" Journal entries and class discussions are regularly used as informal formative assessments, which helps inform me of my students' thoughts, opinions, and knowledge about specific subject matter.

After discussing how some countries and municipalities are already experimenting with UBI (Finland, Kenya, Iran, Stockton, Alaska, etc.), how UBI was a central policy of Andrew Yang's presidential platform, and whether we would classify the federal government's \$1,200 COVID-19 stimulus as UBI, we would watch a video "Universal Basic Income Explained- Free Money for Everybody?" by Kurzgesagt- In a Nutshell. In their video reflection, students would discuss information that was new or interesting to them, information that they agreed or disagreed with, and their rudimentary thoughts on whether UBI is a good policy to implement.

Research Paper

One of my students' summative assessments will be an expository research paper examining Universal Basic Income, including its history, the rationales for and against, and pilot programs in the United States and abroad. This paper will be introduced during the second UBI class, so that students can start thinking about how they would like to structure their paper, and also be cognizant about how our activities in class are related to their summative assessment. We will go over the rubric as a class to make sure that our expectations are aligned, and for the students who believe they will benefit from it, I will pass out an outline showing how their summative assessment can be written (what information could go in each paragraph, sentence stems for their thesis and topic sentences, etc.).

Because the students' projects are heavily premised in research, students will practice research and utilizing credible sources in class, organizing information, and citing to relevant information through in-text citations. When it comes to writing their papers, students will organize their information into a coherent report that takes into consideration proper grammar and mechanics, and will format their papers in MLA, complete with a Works Cited page.

Defined Roles Socratic Seminar

Another summative assessment I will be utilizing to gauge my students' understanding of UBI is a Socratic Seminar with defined roles, where students will discuss the statement, "The United States should immediately implement a Universal Basic Income policy for its citizens," where they will explore the advantages and disadvantages of employing a UBI policy in the United States.

In pairs or as individuals, students will pick certain interest groups or people with certain political views, such as organized labor, conservative voter in Mississippi, progressive voter in New York, welfare recipient, etc. Students can create their own personas and roles, and some of the roles will be left deliberately vague, which will allow students to interpret and research according to their worldview.

Students will prepare for this role by writing a short paper describing who they are, whether or not they feel that the United States should implement a UBI program, and at least 3 rationales to support their position. During the Socratic Seminar, each student will be expected to share at least two times, either through presenting an idea or elaborating off an idea that has already been shared.

Through these activities, it is my hope that my students will gain an appreciation for a new ideology for wealth distribution that they may not have considered before, and in the process, will improve their reading, research, organizational, writing, and speaking abilities.

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Appendix on Implementing District Standards

My English classes and methods of instruction stress the importance of communication, whether it is reading, writing, or speaking, and helps develop those skills through the generation of student-created content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7

My students are given a wide variety of texts to read, reflect upon, and annotate. Students are encouraged to find the main idea of the texts, and to paraphrase the main ideas in their own words. In a given curriculum, they are also often asked to compare texts for similarities and differences in opinion, and to gauge style and credibility. In this course, students will read narratives and informative articles to learn about UBI subject matter and rationales.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1A-E

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7

Students are required and encouraged to write in every class, whether it is for journal entries, reflecting or demonstrating knowledge on unit concepts, or peer reviewing. Students are also guided on how to more clearly organize their writing for comprehension and for stylistic purposes.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.S.11-12.1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.S.11-12.4

Because over 90% of communication in this world is done verbally, I also strive to help my students be comfortable expressing their ideas out loud to their peers and to adults. This is done by first creating a classroom environment where students feel free to express their thoughts without judgement, where only positive reinforcement and encouragement is given. Students will practice their public speaking skills in this unit during our journal warm ups and during class discussions.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.1

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.11-12.6

Finally, students are required to demonstrate command of English grammar and mechanics when undertaking academic work. All students are also expected to learn domain-specific vocabulary, and for my more advanced students, an emphasis is placed on varying syntax for clarity and style. In this unit, students will demonstrate their language skills in their class writing pieces and in their final research project.

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