



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2026 Volume I: The Kids are not the Threat

Inspiring San Jose Youth to Become Activists

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Introduction

Albert Einstein once said that “The world will not be destroyed by those who do evil but by those who watch them and do nothing.” Is there such a thing as an innocent bystander and who has the power to take action? The unit that follows will focus on two major goals. The first is to enable students to learn about the history of youth protest both at large and then specifically in California, and to also show students that they are capable of producing scholarly work at a high level and of organizing their own activism. The typical high school student in San Jose is a student of color from a disadvantaged and/or alternative background, often first-generation citizens with a strong connection to their immigrant past. My students are in the process of uncovering and creating their identities, and it is not uncommon for me to see a wide range of students that are proud of their ethnicity, their gender, and their homelands. My goal for this unit is to show students examples of activism and protest and come out of those different identities and backgrounds in order to make their learning relevant and engaging. Focusing on California and Bay Area stories will also help to increase engagement and learning.

I will be at Calero High School next year after teaching for four years at Mt Pleasant High School, teaching both World and U.S. History. Both Calero and Mt Pleasant are in the East Side Union High School District in San Jose, California. Both would be considered urban schools. Calero is an alternative school of choice. The typical Calero student is a tenth, eleventh, or twelfth grader (there are no freshmen at Calero) who has been dramatically unsuccessful during their freshman year at one of the district’s comprehensive high schools. Many of the incoming sophomores at Calero have zero credits and no confidence. Students come to Calero needing to both recover credits and learn how to be successful in their current classes. Many have lost their sense of self confidence. Because of that one of the important outcomes of this unit will be to show students that they CAN do the work and that they CAN do it successfully, which is why this unit will come at the start of the school year in late August.

Student demographics at Calero are not surprising for an urban California school. 88% of the student body is Latinx, and 30% of the student body is identified as English Language Learners. Because of the type of school Calero is, the students come from all geographic areas of the district. Data from the California Dashboard shows that English and Math test scores are low, with most students scoring well below proficient. The graduation rate is high - 92% for the last year data is available, 2025. However, the level of career and/or

college readiness does not match the high graduation rate, with approximately only 55% of students unprepared for the same period.[1]

Student skills that this unit will address include historical thinking skills that students will use throughout the year, skills that are transferable to other classrooms as well. Students will examine both primary and secondary sources focusing on cause and effect as well as change and continuity over time. Texts will be in a variety of formats, broadening their review skills. The goal is to include photographs, musical selections, and video in addition to written texts. Students will learn to summarize information by creating both biographical and historical writing. Students will be doing research, planning, organizing, writing, and presenting information. Students will also be making claims that are supported by evidence and reasoning.

This unit will start with a wide historical lens and then quickly focus on more local and more recent examples of student protest and activism. Using the course readings students will begin their journey looking at the Civil Rights Movement and the prominence of youth activism in the formation of SNCC and the involvement of the Bennett College women in sit-in protests. In addition, students will have the opportunity to look at an overview of black youth activism in the United States from the 1930s onward. Once students have learned about the long history of youth activism, they will begin to look at more recent events such as the HIV/AIDS crisis, the Black Lives Matter protests, the push for LGBTQ+ equal rights, and the conflict with immigration control, specifically ICE activities. Students will examine what makes a college or high school campus a unique place to foment protest, and see examples of students their age (and a bit older) using their voices to fight for their rights. High school students can be limited in what methods are available to them because they are still minors, but they are far from voiceless and optionless. I want my students to know this and to know that they are following in worthwhile footsteps when they use their voice and take action. As mentioned above these examples will come from either the Bay Area or where necessary California at large, because I want this to be relevant and I want them to see what students like them can accomplish.

As a culminating project students will create a plan for addressing something that they see as an injustice. Their projects will have several parts including:

- Background information on the injustice
- A goal for change
- A plan that they can carry out now as high school students
- Additional plans that could be implemented by young adults who are not minors

Students will be given several options about how this project looks and is presented. The goal here is to show students that they do not have to sit idly by and accept injustice. They can use their voice to positively affect their campus, their neighborhood, and beyond. Research done in creating this unit has laid the groundwork for the learning that students will engage in.

Content Matter Discussion

The first task in creating a unit that is heavily focused on youth activism is to define what we mean by youth activism. Activism has been defined a number of different ways. Merriam Webster dictionary defines activism as vigorous action or campaigning that supports one side of a controversial issue or another. [2] Another

definition from a European Union website titled Liberties.EU refers to activism as “action taken challenging those in power to bring about change in society and benefit the greater good.”[3] My students should be focusing on seeing injustice and trying to alleviate that with action for change. So, what is a youth? For the purposes of this unit a youth will be someone that is either high school or college aged, with a lower age of approximately fourteen and an upper limit in the mid-twenties. What constitutes a youth for the purposes of this discussion has to do with both age and maturity, since a mature eighth grader may be able to organize as successfully as a tenth grader that lacks some maturity. The general gist however, is to focus on young students. Research for this paper focused on two main areas to address a number of questions. What is the historical overview of youth activism in the United States? What does youth activism look like in terms of organization and strategies? And what have been prominent youth activism efforts in the San Francisco Bay area and California at large.

Youth Activism History:

It is likely (though beyond the scope of this unit to research and comment on) that youth activism has existed throughout time. What students need to focus on is just enough historical relevance to show them that youth activism is not new, and that they can learn from studying what has been done before. Our journey through the historical landscape then will focus on a timeline of Black youth activism from the 1930s, and efforts among New York City youth in the late seventies and early eighties to change the way sex education was delivered to high school students in the face of both rising sexual activity and rising rates of HIV/AIDS.

Black Activism in American History:

Sekou Franklin gives us an overview of black youth activism that begins in the 1930s and continues to the present day. In response to the impact of the Great Depression and attention given these impacts by Mary McLeod Bethune, a number of studies were done that agreed that poverty and racism were deepening the alienation of Black youth. In response, several youth organizations came into being including the NAACP Youth Council and the Southern Negro Youth Council. The first national director of the NAACP Youth Council, Juanita Jackson, believed that young people should be in the forefront of the civil rights movement and should be heard when working to improve their own situation. The Southern Negro Youth Council (SNYC) involved itself in a number of actions. These included assisting during a Black tobacco workers strike, creating labor youth clubs, starting the Right to Vote campaign in 1940, and setting up committees to help with paying poll taxes. All of these youth activism efforts predate what the casual observer would call the ‘Civil Right Era’ and show that youth activism has a longer history in the United States than most realize.[4]

Another historical example of youth activism comes to us from the campus of Bennett College in North Carolina, a women’s college in Greensboro. In her book titled *Belles of Liberty* Linda Beatrice Brown weaves a tale of not only young women taking on activist roles but also of the college president that encouraged and supported them. One example from the book tells that in 1958 there were a group of students that organized a boycott to protest the segregation of the Carolina Theater. That same year an article written by student Carolyn Cheagle challenges students to look at where they stand on segregation, stating that compliance equaled support and asking students to consider whether or not they stood up for their rights as American citizens and whether they were proud to be called a Negro. In 1960 the school received recognition for their voter registration drive efforts.[5]

Perhaps the most important activism of the Bennett women was one for which they get too little credit. It was their planning and organizing that led to the Greensboro sit ins in Greensboro. Brown quotes Rev. John Hatchett, Bennett Chaplain from 1957 to 1962 in saying that “From September until early November we met

constantly and discussed viable strategies to implement our goals...we decided to include the students from A&T in our discussions...It was agreed somehow between Christmas recess and the return of the Bennett women to college that the students from A&T would put our idea into execution..." This tells us that the Bennett women were integral to the creation of the sit-ins even though they may not have physically begun them. Their participation upon returning to school was strong and enthusiastic. One student, Patti Gilbert, remembers observing the Bennett women at the protests. Gilbert noted "I have never seen anything like those Bennett Belles...they knew who they were. They were upright and they carried themselves with strength." [6]

According to Franklin the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was "the most important student/youth-based formation of the post-World War II era." Emerging from the student sit-in movement, SNCC focused on stopping racial segregation and helping Southern Blacks access their rights to vote. SNCC also created freedom schools and began long term community organizing efforts, embedding their members within the local community for years at a time. [7] Howard Zinn writes about SNCC in 1964 and refers to them as 'the new abolitionists.' He also emphasizes their importance in a number of ways, stating that "for the first time in our history...a major social movement is being led by youngsters." He goes on to note that although they favor nonviolence, they are by no means passive, using direct action to attempt to bring about change. [8]

The Student Organization for Black Unity (SOBU) was founded in 1969 in Greensboro, North Carolina. SOBU focused their efforts on organizing both high school and college students, building partnerships with prisoners, starting survival programs in poor communities, and establishing food buying clubs and clothing centers. SOBU spread its message in part by publishing a newspaper called *The African World*, a bi-monthly effort with a circulation of 10,000 people. It sponsored several regional conferences in 1971 and 1972 and opened local affiliates in Houston, New Haven, Omaha, and a number of other cities. The organization collapsed in 1975 due to the efforts of the FBI and COINTELPRO to surveil and infiltrate the group. Franklin also notes that black youth activism in general also began to wane after the passages of the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act in the mid-sixties. These wins gave Black Americans the chance to address their issues with the ballot, an advantage that the previous generation did not have. [9]

Youth activism continued after the progress of the Civil Rights Movement began to slow. Franklin talks about one issue in the mid-80s that inspired large protests on college campuses, that of South Africa and Apartheid. Students of color and progressive whites set up a number of campus-based shacks designed to demonstrate the living conditions of many Black South Africans. The activists pressured universities to change their investment strategies to get out of any monetary ties to companies doing business in South Africa. He goes on to discuss the New Haven youth movement in the mid-late 1980s known as 'Kiddie Korner,' a coalition of the New Haven NAACP Youth Council, the African American Youth Congress, and others. The coalition organized anti-gang violence initiatives, worked for equitable educational opportunities, and organized election turnout to successfully elect New Haven's first Black mayor. [10]

All of these examples, and others found in Franklin's work but not discussed here, show students that there is a long and successful history of student organizing and activism. They may not be able to relate to every detail of the actions taken or the causes supported, however they will be able to see that youth have power when they make their voices heard.

Activism Centered on HIV/AIDS Education:

Highlighting a different organization, Gilbert Elbaz writes about the creation of the Youth Education Life Line Curriculum Unit 26.01.06

(YELL), which formed out of the Youth Brigade of ACT UP in response to concerns that HIV/AIDS education was lacking for sexually active youth in a time of rising risk of HIV/AIDS. Formed in 1989 YELL consisted of NYC adolescents that were enrolled in a number of New York's public schools. YELL members were predominantly white and middle class, identifying as either gay, lesbian or bisexual, or resisting any type of label at all.[11]

According to Elbaz, youth first started to organize around the HIV/AIDS issues when they saw that ever increasing numbers of their peers were becoming infected. He notes that studies have shown that youth were especially vulnerable, and though they were a small percentage of the overall HIV/AIDS infection picture, teen infection numbers were doubling every fourteen months. A 1992 congressional committee sponsored study affirmed this bleak outlook, showing that the number of teenagers with AIDS had increased by more than seventy percent in the previous two years, and that AIDS had become the sixth leading cause of death for people between the ages of fifteen to twenty-four.[12]

YELL initially tried to focus on changes to the way HIV/AIDS education was delivered, but ran into increasing cultural roadblock from conservatives who equated HIV/AIDS education with sex education, a taboo subject in society that the time. The activists determined that because the need was urgent that direct action was a more effective direction. Elbaz states that the activists distributed condoms to teens around local schools by the thousands, with some teens taking extra to then deliver inside the schools. Administrators of the schools were passive in the face of this direct action, according to one activist that was interviewed " In my school, _____ High School, the administration allowed me to form an HIV/AIDS club. Peer education is fundamental and really life-saving because few kids will feel secure enough in their sexual identity to go to their counselors and ask for information about sex." [13]

Recent writing amplifies the importance of youth activism in the HIV/AIDS sphere. An article published without author in the *Westside Gazette* (Florida) notes that the National Youth HIV & AIDS Day promotes a belief in youth activism and young people's ability to not just change their lives but to positively affect their peers as well. Chosen after a nationwide search ten youth ambassadors will share their stories about the impact of HIV, barriers that they face, and how to use these challenges to create action in the hopes of inspiring other youth to take action as well.[14]

In all this history we see youth in a historically and socially important moment that are rising to meet the moment with action that creates positive social change. Whether students are people of color or white, whether they are fighting for civil rights or health education or any number of myriad issues, there is a place for youth to have a voice and to make positive change. The next question to examine is how does a young person or group of young people start down the road to successful activism.

Youth Activism Organization and Methods:

If students are going to develop an appreciation for action and activism, then what exactly does that mean or look like? In this section of the curriculum unit, students will look at some information that outlines just that. Publishing in 2016 scholars from the University of Arizona (Jennifer Earl, Thomas V Maher) and Cal State Channel Islands (Thomas Elliott) put forth some ideas that should help my students visualize what can be.

Why Youth?

Bartlett and Yemeni, writing in 2025 about how school-based clubs can be instrumental in fostering youth activism, writing about some of the motivations that today's youth feel when deciding to work for change. They talk about increased awareness of the world around them due to technology and increasing

globalization. They also note that many issues today cross international borders, such as climate change and gender inequalities, and they contend that today's youth often form connections between these global issues and their own local area. Finally, they discuss that youth often feel compelled to act because of issues caused by, and then ignored by, the generations that came before. [15]

Where to Organize:

Their first assertion is that youth activism is most often related to educational campuses. They cite as examples the 1964 Freedom Summer Campaign, the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley, and the Women's Rights movements as well. They also note that campuses continue to be fertile ground for activism today, with such contemporary movements as the DREAMer movement and #BlackLivesMatter.[16] I have seen this in my own schools, last year I had several students come to me wanting to start a UNICEF Club. Through the drive and initiative of the club leaders they raised money by selling food at different school events and took part in the annual UNICEF trick or treating event as well. So much money was raised by these different events that they had leftover money at the end of the school year which was put into reserve for next year's trick or treat donations.

While the school campus is a ready-made environment for the sharing of ideas and the beginnings of youth activism, it is not the only arena available. Ines and Diskala writing in 2025, discuss social media as a place where activism can grow as well. The authors contend that in digital spaces youth can establish a place where their sometimes ignored voices can be heard. They state that "These publics are not merely oppositional but constructive: they build shared futures, articulate critique, foster civic action through the aesthetics of everyday life." Through online storytelling the authors contend that issues such as racism, exclusion, and invisibility can be transformed into messages that mobilize youth to action.[17] Barlett and Yemeni also note that sometimes youth utilize a hybrid approach, beginning with online organization to raise awareness and start organizing, and then moving on to offline, or in person, activities as well.[18]

Developing a Political Viewpoint:

Earl, Maher and Thomas also talk about political socialization, and claim that this is most often something that students do for themselves. Rather than having institutions and families creating the political outlook of the students they are creating their own and at times creating their parents' political socialization as well. The authors claim that families and social networks "provide raw material-knowledge, models, and reflective matter...but it is ultimately the youth themselves who synthesize this material." [19]

The authors claim that youth must be involved in youth-led or youth-oriented spaces for their activism to grow and be successful. If they feel that their voice is not being recognized or is being diluted by adult leaders, they will not be engaged or effective. Adults should be allies, provide resources and serve as models and mentors but should not dominate the space or discount the youth's concerns.[20]

Necessary Supports:

The research by Earl and others augments the history of youth activism by showing what is needed in order for youth to succeed. Youth need the ability to associate, hear and spread ideas, hence the activism that comes from high school, college campuses, and social media. Youth need the raw materials that help them define their views and identity, influences from both family and larger social forces. And youth need positive role models that will show the way and offer support without taking over the activism for themselves. While not discounting online possibilities, a high school classroom becomes a perfect breeding ground for student

activism, with students learning about the world they inhabit, having peers to discuss and create ideas, and having access to trusted adults that will help guide them.

Specific Examples of Youth Activism:

Activism for the Undocumented:

Once students have a grasp of the history, and the organization needed, they will see specific examples of youth activism that will help them to establish their own plans for action. While the best student activism should grow organically from what the students are experiencing, offering examples is a great way to prime the pump and give them a framework for their own thinking.

In the Spring of 2026 students from Mt Pleasant High School and other East Side Union Schools in San Jose staged a walkout to raise awareness about and protest the ICE raids that were happening in the city at the time. Although the raids in San Jose never garnered the attention that some others did around the country (Los Angeles, Minneapolis) they were a very serious concern for our student body.

One of my Latinx students, whom I will only refer to as Dolores (not her real name), participated in the walkout and agreed to have her thoughts included here. I have lightly edited for spelling and grammar without changing the meat of her responses. The walkout was something that several schools in the district had been talking about, but there was little to no organizing that took place at Mt Pleasant. According to Dolores “When I was in class students were outside saying “come out there’s a walk out” I was indecisive about leaving class because I didn’t directly hear about a plan of walking out, no fliers made by students , no one talking about it.” She notes that her teacher was absent that day and the sub was not supportive of students leaving class. On their way off campus a small group, including Dolores, was confronted by the principal and told that the school day was not the time nor place, and that they should plan a safe protest after school. Other adults in Dolores’ life were much more supportive, including her parents. She told me that

“My parents were a hundred percent supportive. I was actually surprised they were since my parents are more of strict parents. I was already outside of school campus when I called my mom and my dad to let them know that they were going to receive a call announcing my absence because I was joining a protest. My mom agreed and told me to call her when we want her to pick us up and my father laughed and called me and my sister crazy and told me to take care of my sister.”

I asked Dolores if they participated in any follow up organizing or activities and was told that while her interest was there, there really was not any follow up amongst the students to engage with. I believe that there was an opportunity lost here, and that with more supportive adults we could have seen some real action for change coming out of Mt Pleasant. As Earl et. al. notes above, students need positive role models that will support their needs as they move towards activism, and that was missing in this instance.[21]

This example can be situated as part of a larger undocumented youth movement that emerged in the 2000s due to campaigned for the Dream Act stemming out of Obama’s Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals executive order. Ala Sirriyah, writing about the undocumented youth movement in 2023 notes that emotions play a key role in recruiting for and inspiring activism, generating action due to anger and fear about the current situation and the contrast between how things are and how they should be. High school students in the Bay Area are no exception to this and most of my students have at least some, and sometimes many,

undocumented relatives. The fear and anxiety that this produces inspires action such as the student walkout at East Side schools described above.[22]

Activism for LGBTQ+ issues:

Youth activism groups also exist in the LGBTQ space, an example being the Outlet Groups in the San Francisco Bay Area, an offshoot of the Adolescent Counseling Services. Although there are many examples of services for youth, this program is youth led. They offer a number of different support groups including the Rainbow Connection designed for youth between ten and fifteen years old, and a Trans support groups for youth between fourteen and twenty-five years old. Most relevant to this unit is their Youth Advisory Board, comprised of youth between fourteen and twenty-five years old that works on identifying and acting upon issues that LGBTQ+ youth are currently struggling with.[23]

Activism for Systemic Racism

In 2020 in San Luis Obispo, California local youth led by Tiana Arata organized and led a protest about systemic racism in the wake of the George Floyd killing. The protest took place on the freeway blocking access for a number of hours and leading to Arata's arrest, based on actions that are disputed by the youth and local law enforcement. For the purposes of this unit, we highlight the youth led actions to call attention to injustice in the world, and the idea that local youth could organize and gather more than 300 protesters to use their voices should show students that they can use their voice and amplify it through others.[24]

California Activism Against Gun and Police Violence

Closer to home for my students, in Oakland, California in 2018 a local youth led an anti-gun protest. Citing their personal experience, the youth, age fourteen, stated "If we are young enough to experience our peers getting shot in their schools then we are young enough to protest that." Roughly 150 youth took part in the protest that was designed to call attention to both the Black Lives Matter movement and the upswing in gun violence in Oakland and across the county.[25]

Bay Area youth also led protests after the George Floyd killing. Writing in *California Black Media* in 2020 Antonio Ray Harvey outlines a number of protests in Sacramento, Oakland, San Francisco, and San Jose, all cities local to my students. He notes that a coalition of young faces

are conspicuous forces within the protests, including Black, Latino, Asian, White, and Arab American youth. The demonstrators that Harvey discusses in the article are as young as eighteen years old, but he quotes Jamier Sale, 28, a founder of criminal justice reform group Cell Block by Cell Block as saying that "...society must begin to understand how people between the ages of 13 and 39 think. It's a generation that must be reckoned with and they bounce their energy off of each other's energy." [26]

Young people all over the country are protesting gun violence, including as recently as July of 2026 with a youth led demonstration near the state capitol building in Sacramento. The protesters were mostly between ages thirteen and twenty-one, but were led by the adult founders of a group known as Voice of the Youth Berry Accius. The statements of Accius in the article show why youth should be involved in gun activism since they are directly affected by the issue of guns in schools, both in urban and suburban environments. He notes that "Young people should be focused on books and education, but instead they're wondering if they'll be the next memorial. The next poster. The next loss." I would argue that yes students should be focused on books and education but part of that education needs to be instruction about how they can use their voice to

produce positive change in the world, instead of wondering if they can and should be taking action.[27]

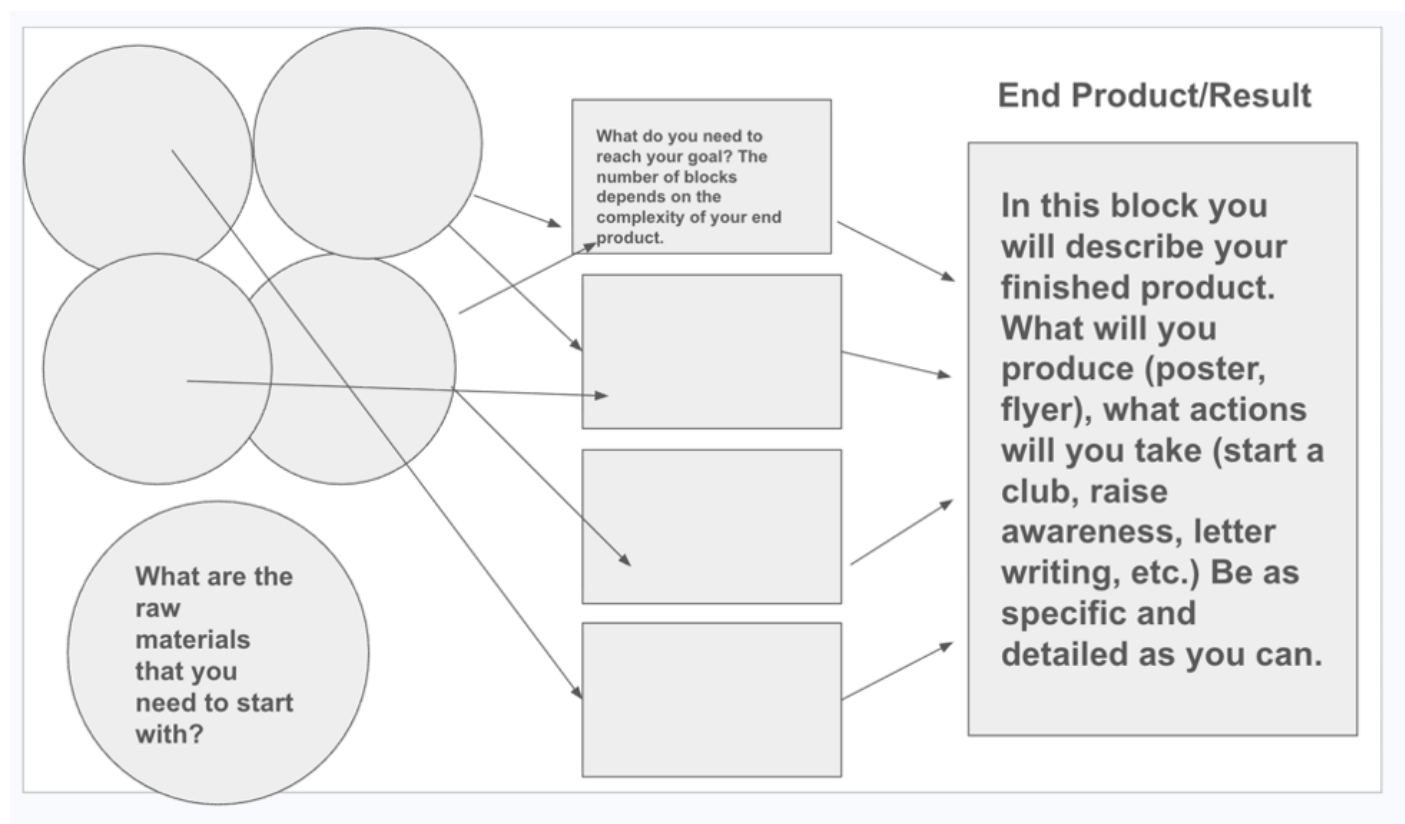
Culminating Project

The culminating project, as described briefly above, requires the student to make a selection about a local or world issue and find a way where they can make a difference. Students can and should choose something that is personally important to them, whether it be Transgender rights, ICE protests, Black live matter issues, or any other civil or human rights issue. When an issue is personally important to the student, as most teachers reading this should already know, then it is more engaging and easier for students to exhibit resilience and perseverance.

Once students have chosen an issue to act upon, they need to decide what it is they can do to effect change. Will they raise awareness on campus? Start a club to build capacity? Get in touch with local leaders or journalists to spread the word? Collect physical items that are needed from the student body and/or community? Start a poster campaign? Or potentially some combination of several of these and more. Students will be given a tool for backwards planning called the Concept Map (originally developed by Edward DeBono) to use in helping them achieve their goals. Starting with the end result in mind, the Concept Fan allows students to see each step necessary as they work out and back from their end goal. This then becomes a roadmap to their success. There is a blank fan (fig 1) below to help teachers visualize, but there are certainly a number of useful graphic organizers that could be used in teaching this unit. My students will use the concept fan as I want them to use it throughout the year in addition to just this unit.

Fig. 1

Concept Map Instructional Sample



Once students have mapped out, or fanned out, a project, they will need to take their ideas and turn them into action. I will supply them with whatever they need to be successful (materials for letter writing, help with scheduling an on-campus rally, tape for putting up their posters, paper, ink, etc.) but the ideas must come from them and they must take the action. Once completed I will ask students to write a reflection about what they learned by going through this unit and more importantly what they learned by becoming youth activists themselves.

It is my hope that students will be willing to present their activist projects to the school at large at a lunch time rally or some similar venue. I can also envision inviting local city council members to see their presentations and offer to take some sort of action to help raise awareness. If students see the added results of achieving external communication over just internal communication they are more likely to appreciate the power of their voices and use them more intentionally.

Teaching Strategies

In the spirit of Vygotsky teaching strategies in this unit will focus mainly on learning through social interaction. Learning happens best through language and communication from teacher to students but more importantly through peer-to-peer interaction. These interactions allow students to assist each other with decoding texts, creating meaning, formulating ideas, and more. Specific interactive teaching strategies that this unit will employ include partner reading, creating mind maps, think-pair-share activities, collaborative summarization, and more. While the unit may start with some direct instruction to learn context and important vocabulary, most learning will be done by peers interacting with the content, given just the right amount of scaffolding to position them for growth and success.

Students will be asked to produce a number of different types of materials in order to address the multiple learning styles in the classroom. Written responses, annotated timelines, informational posters, and text graffiti activities will provide a variety of experiences that will challenge most, if not all, learning styles. Some activities will be approached with a jigsaw framework so that groups of students can learn content and then have the opportunity to teach it to other students as well.

Classroom Activities

Activity One

To begin this unit, I want students to think about themselves and how they may have been activists in the past. I will develop a prompt something along the lines of: "Think about and describe a time in your life when you have stood up for someone by speaking out or taking action." Students can then reflect on what they have already done to help a friend, right a wrong, or call attention to a situation that may need fixing. They may not think about themselves as activists, but this would help them to start thinking about that term in a more personal way, thinking about their actions that they may have already taken.

Activity Two

One of the next early activities that students will engage with is a chapter in a pamphlet from Daniel Hunter that discusses organizing to protest mass incarceration. Writing specifically about Mass Incarceration, his chapter talks about the roles in organizing which he outlines as the helper, advocate, rebel, and organizer. After reading the introductory material together as a class, I will divide the class into four roughly even segments and groups of four and then assign each group one of the roles. The students will be tasked with reading additional details about each role and preparing an information poster that includes a title, appropriately detailed text explaining the role, and a symbol or drawing that relates. Once the posters are complete each group will present their information to the rest of the class, which will compile the information into a graphic organizer that I provide.[28]

After the presentation have been made, students will be paired with others and will have a conversation about what role they see in their partner. Students may not know each other well at the start of the year but will be tasked with having a conversation that allows them to develop that opinion about others. After some time to share and discuss in pairs students will be moved into groups of four so that they can share what they have learned about each other's opinions.

Activity Three

Another activity that I plan to use while teaching this unit is to have students create biographies of student activists. In order get as much breadth as possible they will not get to choose their subjects in this activity, but will rather draw names from a hat or use some other randomization process. Each student will research their activist and then complete a biographical poster that includes:

- Name and age
- Background (where born, education, family life, etc.)
- What change they are working towards
- A list of accomplishments
- Continuing goals of their activism
- A quote
- A drawing of their person

When the posters are complete students will present them cooperatively to at least three other students. This can be done any number of ways that a teacher is comfortable with, I like to again have some randomization by putting students into two parallel lines and having them present to the person across from each other. One could also use playing cards, or different color index cards, or whatever. The point is to have each student use this as an opportunity to teach other students about the activist that they researched. Once the sharing and presenting is finished students will write a short paragraph about what they have learned, including specifically what the activists have in common with each other.

Appendix on Implementing District Strategies

California Historical Analysis Skills

Chronological and Spatial Thinking

1. Students compare the present with the past, evaluating the consequences of past events

and decisions and determining the lessons that were learned. *Students will be using the knowledge they gain from past student activism examples to create their own plan for action.*

Historical Interpretation

1. Students show the connections, causal and otherwise, between particular historical

events and larger social, economic, and political trends and developments. *Students will tie their activism to issues and injustice in the larger world around them, giving them the opportunity to apply what they have learned.*

California Content Standards

- 10.10. 3. Discuss the important trends in the regions today and whether they appear to serve

the cause of individual freedom and democracy. *This is a World standard that helps connect the curriculum unit to the larger issues that students will study.*

11.10 Students analyze the development of federal civil rights and voting rights. *Several of the historical youth activism examples that students will look at come out of the Civil Rights movement, including the creation of SNCC and the Bennett women creating the strategy of the lunch counter sit ins.*

Annotated Bibliography

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<https://www.acs-teens.org/our-services/outlet/outlet-groups/>, accessed July 11, 2026. *This website contains information about a youth-led LGBTQ activist group in Northern California.*

Amaral Inês and Ventura Disakala. , "Digital Youth Activism on Instagram: Racial Justice, Black Feminism, and Literary Mobilization in the Case of Marley Dias," *Journalism and Media* 6, no. 3 (2025): 104, doi:<https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia6030104>.
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