

NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards Program

Lessons Learned from NEA's Social Justice Advocates

DR. PAUL HERNANDEZ

Reg Weaver Human and Civil Rights Award



Lesson At-A-Glance

- ▶ **Opening the Lesson:**
A Thankful Future
- ▶ **Leading the Lesson:**
Meaning to Mentor
- ▶ **Closing the Lesson:**
The Goals of a
Difference Maker

Objective(s)

- ▶ Students will examine why school matters to themselves, their families, and communities.
- ▶ Students will be able to explain why having equal rights and opportunities in education is a Social Justice cause.
- ▶ Students will be able to research and explain the issue of the dropout crisis in the United States.
- ▶ Students will be able to define the concept of advocacy and describe the actions of a social justice advocate.
- ▶ Students will discuss social justice contributions of Dr. Paul Hernandez.

Materials/Preparation

- ▶ Markers, colored pencils, crayons, tape
- ▶ Chart paper (six pieces)
- ▶ Sticky notes (several per student)
- ▶ Handout 1: Vocabulary Talk and Walk Cards (print and cut five sets of cards and pre-count the cards so that there are enough cards for the number of students in your class – each student should have a partner and if there are an odd number of students then one trio can be formed – see step 1 on page 2 for further clarification)
- ▶ Handout 2: Introducing Dr. Paul Hernandez (make one copy per student)
- ▶ Handout 3: Thinking about Poverty: Impacts and Prevalence



- ▶ Handout 4: The Dropout Crisis - Making a Difference
- ▶ Prior to teaching the lesson label the six pieces of chart paper with the following titles and post in the classroom:
 - Poverty in the United States
 - Poverty and children
 - Poverty and gender
 - Poverty and minorities
 - Poverty and seniors
 - Other
- ▶ Prior to teaching the lesson familiarize yourself with Dropout Crisis by visiting <http://www.nea.org/home/DropoutPrevention.html>.
- ▶ Prior to teaching the lesson familiarize yourself with Paul Hernandez's background by reading the Lesson Plan Introduction that can be found at www.nea.org/hcawards.

Suggested Grouping Structures

Whole group discussion and independent work

Estimated total lesson time: 70 minutes

Opening the Lesson (10 minutes)

A Thankful Future

1. **Give** each student a vocabulary card (Handout 1). Direct students to find a partner with a matching card (or trio if needed) and talk about what they think the term means as they walk around the room.
 - Achievement Gap
 - Social Inequality
 - Dropout Crisis
 - Social Justice
 - Income inequality
 - Economic security
 - Poverty
 - Equal Opportunity

Teaching Tip:

After step 1, collect the Vocabulary Talk and Walk Cards and reshuffle them for use in the lesson closing.

2. **Call** the class back together after about five minutes and review each of the terms and meanings with the class, building on the conversations between the students that "talked and walked" about each of the terms.

Teaching Tip:

Before step 3, be sure the statistics that you share with the students about the poverty rate and the dropout rate in the United States are current.

3. **Follow** up about the terms of Dropout Crisis and Poverty by assessing the students' familiarity with these two issues. Write the questions about statistics on the board and ask students to make a guess (and keep it to themselves). Share the answers and clarify understanding about these two terms.

Poverty in the United States

How many people in the United States are living in poverty?

- a. 400 thousand
- b. 4.6 million
- c. 46.7 million
- d. 467 million

Correct answer: 46.7 million (hint: the population of the United States is 318.9 million)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2014)

High School Graduation Rates in the United States

What is the public high school graduation rate in the United States?

- a. 61%
- b. 71%
- c. 81%
- d. 91%

Correct answer: 81% or 3.1 million public high school students graduated on time with a high school diploma

Source: National Center for Education Statistics (2012)

- Tell** students that they are going to learn more about what each of those terms mean through today's lesson about a Social Justice Advocate and his actions to eliminate poverty and help poor students in the United States.

Leading the Lesson (30 minutes)

Meaning to Mentor

- Say**, "A person who stands up for others when they are being not being treated equally is called a Social Justice Advocate."
- Introduce** Dr. Hernandez to the class. Dr. Hernandez is leader and advocate who works with communities, schools, and young people to help ensure that everyone has

the same freedom and opportunity to go to school, learn, achieve, and be successful. Dr. Hernandez's social justice work is in the area of equity of opportunity in education. We are learning about him today because he was recognized by the National Education Association who honored Dr. Hernandez with a Human and Civil Rights Award.

- Give** each student a copy of Handout 2. Direct students to read independently about Dr. Hernandez.

Dr. Paul Hernandez
High School
Grades 9-12

LESSON PLAN HANDOUT 2 Introducing Dr. Paul Hernandez

Introducing the National Education Association Human and Civil Rights Awards Program Recipient Dr. Paul Hernandez

Before he earned a Ph.D. in Sociology, before his Bachelors Degree from a university, before his Associate Degree from a community college, Paul Hernandez was an "at-risk" K-12 student—at risk of dropping out.

Paul Hernandez never forgot those early years or the things that seemed unjust. Now he directs his academic work toward engaging students like him and his friends, providing them with the opportunities and experiences that support educational success. In so doing, he collaborates closely with educators of today's at-risk students.

Dr. Hernandez is an Associate Professor at Central Michigan University. His research focuses on the sociology of education and social inequality. He works with schools to implement a unique approach to working with young people of his own design that helps teachers and administrators improve passing rates and build meaningful relationships with students at risk of dropping out.

A hands-on academic, Dr. Hernandez encourages educators around the country to correspond with him at hema3p@cmich.edu regarding any questions about College 101: Introducing At-Risk students to Higher Education or his alternative pedagogy.

In 2012, Dr. Hernandez was recognized by the National Education Association. He was given the Reg Weaver Human and Civil Rights Award. This award is given in honor of Reg Weaver who is a former President of the National Education Association. As a classroom teacher for more than 30 years, Mr. Weaver saw first hand the toll that poverty takes on students. When he became President of NEA, he kept the spotlight on the unique challenges facing families and students due to economic circumstances. NEA presented

"Administrators and teachers often spoke of me as a thing rather than a person. They struggled to connect with me and my homeboys or to help us see a world beyond the Los Angeles ghettos we called home. Rather than trying alternative methods to connect with students like us, our schools funneled most resources toward college-track students. They went on visits to universities, museums, and corporate headquarters, while we were sentenced to meaningless repetition tasks. Eventually, I dropped out."

DR. PAUL HERNANDEZ

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- Allow** students a few minutes to read Handout 2 and then discuss the article. Ask students to point out the namesake of the award Dr. Hernandez received. Reg Weaver was also a Social Justice Advocate with a long history of service to students impacted by poverty in the United States. Discuss with the class why

equal opportunity in education issues such as the dropout prevention and closing the achievement gap are Social Justice issues.

- Ask** students to think about any questions they have after reading Handout 2. Give several sticky notes to each student and direct students to list each of their questions on a separate sticky note.
- Distribute** Handout 3 (Thinking about Poverty - Impacts and Prevalence). Have students complete the left hand column titled "Thoughts" by listing their thoughts or guesses/expectations (prior to research) about the prevalence and impacts of poverty for the five groups listed.

	Thoughts	Notes
Poverty in the United States		
Poverty and children		
Poverty and gender		
Poverty and minorities		
Poverty and seniors		

- Allow** time for students to complete the first column of Handout 3. Next, have students list questions on sticky notes. Once sticky notes

are complete direct students to place sticky notes onto one of the six charts (posted prior to the lesson).

- Assign** students to five groups and assign each group one of the five poverty research areas on Handout 3.

The five poverty research areas:

- Poverty in the United States
- Poverty and children
- Poverty and gender
- Poverty and minorities
- Poverty and seniors

- Allow** 20 minutes for groups to complete their research. They should conduct general research about the impacts and prevalence of poverty for their topic area and they should also attempt to address the questions listed on the sticky notes placed on chart that matches their topic (from step 11). While students are completing their research, review the sticky notes on the "other" poster and either assign those questions to one of the groups or answer them yourself and share with the students after the groups share.

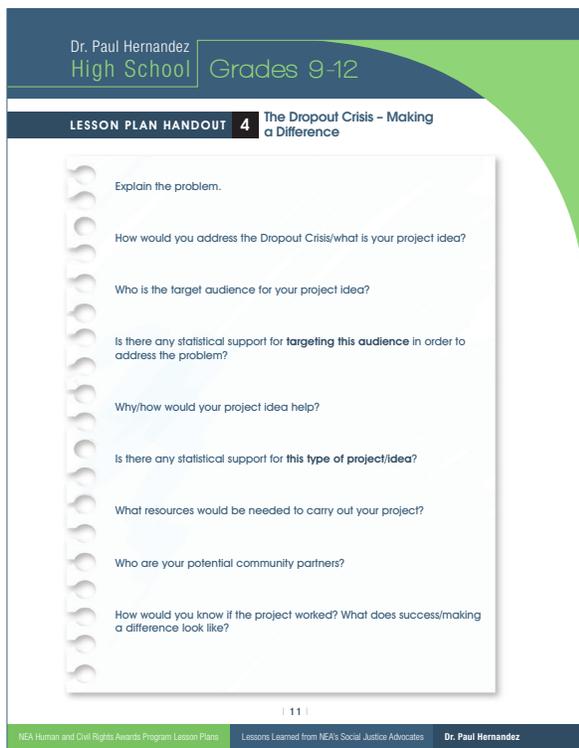
- Ask** each group to share their research about poverty. As groups report their research, have the rest of the class take notes in the "Notes" column of Handout 3.

Closing the Lesson (30 minutes)

The Goals of a Difference Maker

- Assign** partners and distribute Handout 4. Tell students that, with their partners, they will be answering the questions in order to come up with a plan for a project that will address one of the impacts of poverty on youth, the

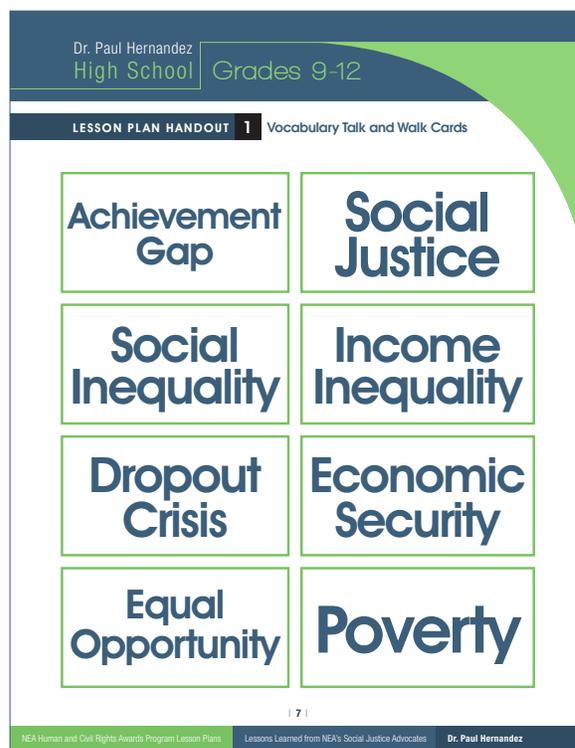
dropout crisis. Direct pairs to come up with their own plan to address the dropout crisis and complete Handout 4.



16. **Allow** 20 minutes for students to complete their plans. Ask each pair to meet with another pair (creating a group of four) and share their project ideas. After a few minutes, ask each group of four to choose one of the projects (or merge their ideas into one if they are similar). Ask each pair of four to find another group of four (creating a group of eight) and share their project ideas. After a few minutes, ask the groups of eight to choose one of the projects (or merger of ideas) to share with the whole class. (Teaching note: depending on your class size and available time, you may have to modify this teaching strategy to balance the group size. For example, have each pair share

their idea with the class, rather than breaking into smaller groups.)

- Point** out the commonalities between the ideas they develop and the idea of mentoring. List the actions of Dr. Hernandez and then think about why those may have been his chosen “action methods.” Discuss as a class. What were his goals to make a difference and why did mentoring best fit with his goals. What are their goals and what action strategies may best work for them? How can the difference begin today?
- Repeat** the Vocabulary Talk and Walk activity from the opening and have students share how their understanding of each term has changed during the lesson.



Assessment Suggestions

- ▶ Participation in class discussion, small group and partner work
- ▶ Informally assess understanding using Handout 3 and 4

Adaptations, Enrichment, Cross-curricular Opportunities

- ▶ Collaborate with the technology educator and integrate technology standards into this lesson (i.e., reliable sources when conducting Internet research).
- ▶ Extend the learning by teaching students the importance of using local data to accurately represent the scope of an issue. An accurate understanding is key to developing solutions that work (i.e., social norming theory).
- ▶ Extend studying of the dropout crisis by comparing with international statistics about graduation rates. Research the value of public

education in other societies outside of the United States. How is equality in education addressed internationally as a Human Rights Issue?

- ▶ Integrate writing: Have students write mock or real letters or emails to community and school leaders to share their project proposals and/or raise awareness and understanding about the dropout crisis from those directly impacted - the students.
- ▶ Integrate Social Studies by having students study how educational laws and policies have changed over time to support the needs of students living in poverty (e.g., the Every Student Succeeds Act).
- ▶ Integrate math by having students focus on interpreting and representing the statistical aspects of the issues in this lesson.

**Achievement
Gap**

**Social
Justice**

**Social
Inequality**

**Income
Inequality**

**Dropout
Crisis**

**Economic
Security**

**Equal
Opportunity**

Poverty



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Civil Rights Award to Dr. Hernandez because his efforts and activities have made a significant impact in helping poor students and eliminating poverty.

In addition to receiving the NEA Reg Weaver Human and Civil Rights Award, he has been the recipient of numerous higher education awards in Michigan, including the Equity in Education Award, the Honors Professor of the Year Award, and the Community Leader and Service Award.

His article on College 101 was published in The NEA Higher Education Journal: Thought & Action in 2011. He has also written for the Michigan Sociological Review.

Dr. Hernandez is also in demand as a speaker at community and school events. He has addressed the Save Our Children Coalition, the César Chávez Academy, and numerous middle and high schools attended by poor and minority students.

LESSON PLAN HANDOUT

3

Thinking about Poverty – Impacts and Prevalence

	Thoughts	Notes
Poverty in the United States		
Poverty and children		
Poverty and gender		
Poverty and minorities		
Poverty and seniors		

LESSON PLAN HANDOUT

4

The Dropout Crisis – Making
a Difference

Explain the problem.

How would you address the Dropout Crisis/what is your project idea?

Who is the target audience for your project idea?

Is there any statistical support for **targeting this audience** in order to address the problem?

Why/how would your project idea help?

Is there any statistical support for **this type of project/idea**?

What resources would be needed to carry out your project?

Who are your potential community partners?

How would you know if the project worked? What does success/making a difference look like?