



DRIVING QUESTION

How can we identify and address problems in the American justice system to make it more fair and equal for everyone?

PROJECT SUMMARY

In this project, students will take on the role of a justice reform advocate. They will research real issues in today's legal system – like racial bias in sentencing, how money affects access to justice, or how juvenile offenders are treated – and investigate how the Constitution, especially the 14th Amendment, relates to those problems. Topics include: Racial or gender bias in sentencing, unequal access to legal defense (wealth gap in justice), juvenile justice and rehabilitation, prison reform and incarceration rates, the use of solitary confinement, use of plea deals and mandatory minimums, death penalty fairness, and disparities between state and federal systems.

REAL-WORLD CONTEXT

Students will be investigating current, ongoing problems that affect real people every day. These are topics that they are seeing in the news and topics that are being debated in the courts, and media. Students are also seeing these issues on social media so this is very relevant to them. Students will also be acting as justice reform advocates, policy analysts, or legal advisors. These are professions that exist outside the classroom and ones that our students may want to think about pursuing beyond being a lawyer.

PRODUCTS & AUDIENCE

Students will create a Justice Reform Proposal that explains the issue, shows the evidence, and presents realistic solutions to make the system more fair.

STUDENT REFLECTIONS

- “The roles and conflict norms were most helpful, especially with having a group contract. It made me realize we need to communicate more, since a lot of our works were turned in late because we really weren't communicating consistently.”
- “It was interesting to learn about the bias in the justice system and how corrupt things are in this country.”
- “One activity that we had to do was research other countries to figure out different ideas that would work our new reform idea. It was interesting to see how the other countries tackled these issues and apply it here.”

NC PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE SKILLS GAINED



COLLABORATION



EMPATHY



COMMUNICATION



LEARNER'S MINDSET



CRITICAL THINKING



PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

TEACHER REFLECTION

“Overall despite several factors outside our control (unprecedented student absences and 2 weather days which caused our authentic audience not to be able to participate) my students really learned a lot from this PBL project regarding the issues in our judicial system. My students were able to create some really detailed video presentations regarding their justice system reforms and share their research with their peers. While there are many changes I would make to this project, this was a good first attempt.”