

L.A. youth teacher's guide

Publishing Schedule

L.A. Youth will begin arriving Wed., Oct. 21

Key to using the October 2009 issue:

ARTICLE and PAGE NUMBER	KEY TEACHING POINTS
<p>Budget cuts make it harder to learn p. 5 Teens at four schools say crowded classes and fewer supplies have meant less time for teaching.</p>	<p>How have budget cuts affected your school? What can students do to make sure they're still learning despite the changes?</p>
<p>Math doesn't add up for me pp. 6-7 Beatriz has always struggled to learn math but knows it's important.</p>	<p>Are there subjects that are more challenging for you? What can you do to get help in those subjects to make sure you learn?</p>
<p>Doing our part p. 8 Breanna got her family to help the environment by recycling.</p>	<p>Does your family recycle? What can you do to help the environment?</p>
<p>Catching on to juggling p. 9 It took patience to learn but now Freddy is always trying new juggling tricks.</p>	<p>What is something you're proud of learning to do? What have you always wanted to do but haven't tried yet?</p>
<p>COVER STORY: My second chance at school pp. 10-11 After ditching and a serious illness, an alternative high school got Patricia back on track to graduate.</p>	<p>What keeps you motivated to stay in school? What can teachers and schools do to help keep students motivated?</p>
<p>Determined to finish p. 12 Teens who were at risk of dropping out share how an alternative school helped them succeed.</p>	<p>See lesson plan on page 2.</p>
<p>Taking on teen pregnancy pp. 16-17 Ernesto was part of a play that taught him and his classmates about the consequences of sex.</p>	<p>Do you feel you've learned enough about sex and its consequences? Do you think teens should be taught this information at school?</p>
<p>There's more to school than books pp. 18-19 In Korea all Ben did was study, but in America he can pursue his interests.</p>	<p>What do you like most about school? What activities do you wish you could do that aren't offered at your school?</p>
<p>Rap that makes me think pp. 20-21 From religion to social justice, Stanton says there's more to hip hop than party songs.</p>	<p>What is your favorite type of music? Do you relate to the lyrics? How do they make you feel?</p>
<p>I was out of control pp. 22-23 Sara used to break windows and disrespect people, but now she's trying to think before she acts.</p>	<p>What behavior have you had to work on? What helped you change?</p>

Why do students drop out?

A lesson plan based on “Determined to finish” from the October 2009 issue of L.A. Youth. In “Determined to finish” four students from Cesar Chavez Alternative School in Compton share how the learning environment at a continuation school changed their attitudes about school and kept them from dropping out.

By Mike Fricano, co-managing editor

Grades: 7-12

Subjects: Language Arts, Life Skills

Suggested Time Allowance: 45 minutes-1 hour

Overview:

Students will identify reasons that students drop out and how schools and teachers play a role in helping to keep students on track to graduate.

Resources/Materials:

- copies of the L.A. Youth article “Determined to finish” (one per student)
- pens/pencils and paper
- white board or black board

Introduction:

Earlier this year, State Superintendent of Public Education Jack O’Connell released a report stating that in 2007-08, an estimated 68.3 percent of public school students in California graduated, which was up slightly from 67.7 percent the previous year. And the dropout rate for the same school year was 20.1 percent, down from 21.1 percent the year before.

While the slight drop in the number of dropouts was seen as encouraging, O’Connell called the dropout rate unacceptable. With California having more than 2 million high school students enrolled in 2007-08, that still means that more than 105,000 students dropped out. Students without a high school diploma will have a harder time getting jobs that can support them and have fewer opportunities than those with diplomas and college degrees.



Warm-up discussion:

Ask your students whether they know anyone who has dropped out of school. Then ask why they think that some students drop out of school and write their answers in a list on the board. Answers could include: school is too hard, they don’t like school, they have to get a job to help support the family, problems at home or teen pregnancy, among others.

After writing the list, ask the students what teachers and the school can do to help keep students in school. Write these answers in a list next to the first list. They might say: more interesting lessons, teachers getting to know students on a personal level, small class sizes, more challenging classes or counselors who keep track of attendance better. Now discuss how many things from the two lists your students see at their school. Do they think too many students drop out? Do they feel like their school does enough? Do they think it’s important to stay in school and graduate?

Activities:

Have students read the group discussion featuring four Chavez students, “Determined to finish,” on page 12. As a discussion or as a written assignment, ask students to answer the following questions about the discussion:

What made things difficult at their old schools for the students?

- Riyanna didn’t have strong connections with her teachers.
- Patricia and Riyanna ditched a lot

and no one seemed to notice for a while.

- Bianca got pregnant.
- People told Riyanna that she wasn’t going to be successful and she started to believe them.

How are things different for the students at Chavez?

- The classes are smaller and teachers can take time to explain things individually.
- They know their teachers on a personal level.
- Teachers show faith in the students’ ability to succeed.
- The teachers were more flexible with Bianca’s responsibilities having to take care of her baby.
- Students have more chances to catch up when they’re behind on credits needed to graduate.

Discussion:

After reading the group discussion, ask your students what they think schools should do to help prevent students from dropping out. What would have helped the students in the group discussion at their old schools? Should regular high schools try similar strategies as continuation schools?

Assignment:

Have students write an essay explaining why they think students drop out of school and what their school can do to better prevent students from dropping out. Encourage them to give their essays to an administrator or guidance counselor so the school can hear their ideas.

Extension activity:

Most students would probably say that they’ve had at least a few dull teachers or lessons in their lives. One reason that students drop out is a lack of interest in school. Have students break into groups and write their own lesson for the next appropriate topic in class that they think would be more engaging and yet still teach information.



Would you like a speaker from L.A. Youth?

Editors Laura Lee and Mike Fricano speak about journalism, current events, working as a reporter, how to be a better writer and how students can get involved in L.A. Youth.

Call Laura or Mike at (323) 938-9194 or e-mail llee@layouth.com or mfricano@layouth.com. PLEASE NOTE: You'll be asked to pay \$5 to help offset the cost of gas.

THANKS TO TEACHERS who contributed letters to the editor: Jolie Augustine, Wilson MS in Glendale; Elizabeth Montaña, Camino Nuevo Charter Academy; and Paramount HS.

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Next Newcomer's Orientation: **Saturday, Dec. 12, 11 a.m.-noon** at L.A. Youth 5967 W. Third Street Suite 301, L.A. 90036 (between Fairfax and La Brea)

Call Amanda, Laura or Mike at (323) 938-9194.

Tell us how you use L.A. Youth in the classroom

Without teachers we wouldn't be able to reach the many teens who read L.A. Youth at their schools. When teachers use L.A. Youth articles in their lessons or just share the newspaper with their students, we know our stories are making a difference.

Teachers have told us how much their students enjoy reading L.A. Youth, but we also could use your valuable feedback. The Teacher's Guide is now available only online, but we hope it continues to be a useful resource. We'd like to know how you use L.A. Youth so we can find ways to improve our Teacher's Guide. How do you incorporate L.A. Youth into your lesson plans? If you use the Teacher's Guide, what do you find most helpful—the teaching points, the lesson plan or both? What else would be helpful? Please share a specific example of how you use L.A. Youth or how you used a particular story, issue or lesson plan.

Please send an e-mail to editor@layouth.com by Nov. 15, 2009. Please write 'Teacher feedback' in the subject line. Three teachers will be selected randomly to receive \$25.

Thank you for your help.



Wilson MS teacher Jolie Augustine and a student look over an issue of L.A. Youth.