

Empowering Students to Shape Pandemic Budgets

By Jackson Potter

Lesson 0
Lesson Objectives and Essential Questions
<p>Objectives: Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Surface the issues and interests that elicit the greatest concern in this moment of Covid from housing scarcity, vaccine disparities, food deserts, etc. To start the process students will self select a news story about how the pandemic has impacted Chicago. This will give classes a baseline of issues to address in their advocacy. ● Identify 2-3 of their main concerns about the racial and economic inequities that have been exacerbated by COVID-19 by exploring articles of their choice highlighting Covid impacts on our communities. ● Identify potential solutions to racial or economic issues exacerbated by COVID-19 that leverage community resources or policy. <p>Essential Question: What are the problems you would like to address that have been exacerbated by the covid pandemic?</p>
Warm-up
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Present the following study captured in the CPS Budget Unit Presentation (slide 3): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Recently, the organization Public Citizen has found that 40 percent of all US Covid deaths, which currently total over 600,000 people, were a result of a lack of medical insurance. We know that students and families are dealing with depression, lack of internet access, threats of eviction, and loss of income. 2. Ask students: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. If you suddenly learned that you had \$2 billion to help students and families in the Chicago Public Schools, what would you do with it? How would you spend it? Share your response with one or more of your classmates.
Focus text(s) / resource(s) for today's lesson
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evictions in Richmond.

2. [Remote learning inequities](#)
3. [Housing insecurity in CPS](#) and [throughout Chicago](#)
4. [‘I’m Not Comfortable’: Vaccine Hesitancy May Be Driving Gap in Who Is Getting Shots](#)
5. [Loss of Black Teachers in CPS](#)
6. [Racial Disparities in Vaccine Distribution in Chicago](#)
7. [Challenging Vaccine Conspiracies across Chicago](#)
8. [Deforestation and Covid](#)
9. [Teens Mental Health and Covid](#)
10. [Expansion of Child Tax Credit for Undocumented families](#)
11. [Advocates push for Rent Control in Illinois](#)
12. [Illinois legislators consider elimination of mandatory gun sentences](#)
13. [Police free schools in CPS?](#)
14. [Solar for schools. carbon free Illinois?](#)
15. [Chicago Public Schools Budget Unit](#) Presentation [[PDF](#)]

Lesson / Activities

1. Have students choose any news stories from the list below about the pandemic, racial inequities, and Chicago Public Schools that they are most interested in exploring to examine how racial and economic inequities have worsened during the crisis. These articles will give classes a baseline of issues to address in their advocacy:
 - [Evictions in Richmond.](#)
 - [Remote learning inequities](#)
 - [Housing insecurity in CPS](#) and [throughout Chicago](#)
 - [‘I’m Not Comfortable’: Vaccine Hesitancy May Be Driving Gap in Who Is Getting Shots](#)
 - [Loss of Black Teachers in CPS](#)
 - [Racial Disparities in Vaccine Distribution in Chicago](#)
 - [Challenging Vaccine Conspiracies across Chicago](#)
 - [Deforestation and Covid](#)
 - [Teens Mental Health and Covid](#)
 - [Expansion of Child Tax Credit for Undocumented families](#)
 - [Advocates push for Rent Control in Illinois](#)

- [Illinois legislators consider elimination of mandatory gun sentences](#)
- [Police free schools in CPS?](#)
- [Solar for schools, carbon free Illinois?](#)

2. Have students answer the following comprehension questions independently:
 - a. Craft a summary of the article.
 - b. What issue is the article exploring? Who is being affected by the issue and why?
 - c. What surprised you about the article?
3. Jigsaw students into small groups and have them share the article they reviewed by answering the following questions:
 - a. What did you choose to read? Share your summary.
 - b. What issue does your article explore? (gun violence, policing, climate change)
 - c. What new details did you learn about the issue?
 - d. How does the article speak to the themes of racial inequality and/or COVID-19?
4. After students share their individual articles, each group can hold space for the entire team to consider the following question:
 - a. If they could design any policy and access the resources needed, how would they try to solve the issue explored in the article?
5. As a class, identify the issues highlighted by the collection of news stories:
 - a. Vaccine distribution and/or vaccine hesitancy
 - b. Climate Change
 - c. Chicago Public Schools
 - d. Housing Insecurity
 - e. Education / Youth
 - f. Gun Control / Policing

Closing)

Ask students to reflect independently or in pairs on the following question:

How did you feel about the issue before you took action and after you took action? To what do you attribute the change?

Lesson 1
Lesson Objectives and Essential Questions
<p>Objectives: Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess CPS budget priorities • Develop their own budget priorities through a google sheet budgeting activity <p>Essential Question: If you had \$2 billion to spend in the Chicago Public Schools, what would you prioritize?</p>
Warm-up
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide an overview of the day's lesson (slide 4). 2. Have students review and discuss the BLM Week of action demands in pairs or small groups (slide 5). 3. Have students share out their responses to the following questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Which demands resonated with you the most? Why? b. Is this a demand you would want to win for our schools? All schools?
Focus text(s) / resource(s) for today's lesson
<p>BLM Week of action demands</p> <p>5 Things To Know About Chicago Public Schools' Budget</p> <p>CPS Budget Basics Survey (make a copy) [Excel]</p> <p>Demands Graphic Organizer</p> <p>Chicago Public Schools Budget Unit Presentation (slides 4-8) [PDF]</p>
Lesson / Activities
<p>Building Context Around the CPS Budget</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce students to NPR's 5 Things To Know About Chicago Public Schools' Budget. You can choose to summarize the five key points for students or ask students to read the article independently.

2. Give students 10 minutes to complete the google form on [CPS Budget Basics Survey](#) You can break them out in groups or pairs (slide 6).
3. As a class, go over all student responses together (slide 7). Discuss the following questions as a whole group:
 - a. What is your prediction on what you and your classmates think are the main priorities we should address with this new money?
 - b. What trends and patterns did you notice?
 - c. What are your classes' top 3 priorities?
 - d. How do your priorities compare and contrast with the priorities of the Mayor, the School Board, the Teachers Union, or community organizations (slide 8)?

Closing

Ask students to reflect independently or in pairs on the following questions:

1. Do you feel good about the services and programs you prioritized in the exercise?
2. Did listening to your peers change your priorities? In what ways?
3. Do you wish you did more?
4. Do you wish you did something different?

Lesson 2

Lesson Objectives and Essential Questions

Objectives:

Students will be able to...

- Graph their preferences for the purpose of conducting advocacy and outreach on their demands.

Essential Question:

What would you prioritize with your school allocation from the American Rescue Act?

Warm-up

1. Provide an overview of the day's lesson (slide 9).

2. Ask students to refer to their class' top three priorities from yesterday. Teachers can use the graph from the google form summary tool.
3. Ask students to discuss the following questions (slide 11):
 - a. What patterns and discrepancies do you notice from your own preferences?
 - b. What do you think it would take to win these investments?

Focus text(s) / resource(s) for today's lesson

[11 questions about how the American Rescue Plan will affect schools, answered](#)

[2 Billion: CARES funding budget example](#) (Make a copy of for each student)

[Chicago Public Schools Budget Unit Presentation](#) (slides 9-11) [\[PDF\]](#)

Lesson / Activities

Building A Budget

1. Share "[11 questions about how the American Rescue Plan will affect schools, answered](#)" with students which reviews the American Rescue Act.
2. Explain how the budget is used as a tool to identify the government's priorities and allocate funds to those priorities (slide 10).
3. Review each of the three tabs for students:
 - a. 1st tab - show students how to rank their preferred budget items. This simply involves ranking their top choice #1 in the Rank column on the far right highlighted in orange, to #15 or more if you add categories.
 - b. 2nd tab - show students how to determine their school's enrollment by visiting <https://www.cps.edu/schools/find-a-school/> and plugging in your total enrollment number next to the column next to "Add your school enrollment" your low-income percentage (your low-income enrollment will then appear automatically).

Once you enter your school enrollment and low income data, the function of the google sheet will automatically compute the amount per student available to your school from the federal American Rescue Act.
 - c. Lastly, in the 2nd tab in the "Services" and "Budget" columns, have students begin to build their budget and enter in the amounts they want to spend on each item.

For example, they may want 10 full time nurses, so they would type in “Full time nurse” into column “Services” and multiply \$100,000 times 10 (using the cost estimates from tab 1) to put \$1,000,000 into the “Budget” column for that item.

- d. 3rd tab - Have students copy and paste the “Services” and “Budget” section (with all their spending) from tab #2 into tab #3. All students need to do to create their graph is to highlight the entire “Services” and “Budget” section and click “insert chart” and choose “pie chart.” Google sheets will then generate a pie chart and they can change the labels on the x and y axis if they want or leave it as it is.
4. Students should spend the rest of class building their budgets independently.
 5. Once students have completed their independent budgets, have them share their budgets and pie charts in small groups or the whole class.
 6. Ask students to reflect on the budget building activity independently or in pairs:
 - a. What did you learn?
 - b. What are you willing / interested in fighting for?
 - c. Where do our ideas converge and where do they differ?
 - d. Is there a way to reconcile those?

Closing

Ask students to reflect on the following question:

If future students had an opportunity to engage in a similar project, what would you change? What would you keep? Why?

Lesson 3

Lesson Objectives and Essential Questions

Objectives:

Students will be able to...

- Analyze and connect with public critiques of budget
- Practice making different graph types of your budget

Essential Question:

How can you work with others to promote student voice in the CPS budget process?

Warm-up

1. Provide an overview of the day's lesson (slide 12)
2. Have students listen to Youth Activist [Catyln Savado](#) speech given to city council (3:00 mins)
3. Invite students to share their responses to the following questions?
 - a. Summarize Catyln's critique about education and policing in Chicago?
 - b. Does Catyln offer solutions? If not, what solutions would you offer?
 - c. What resonated with you?

Focus text(s) / resource(s) for today's lesson

[Alderman Jeanette Taylor's critique of Mayor Lightfoot's budget](#)

[Campaign document](#)

[Chicago Public Schools Budget Unit Presentation](#) (slides 12 - 14) [[PDF](#)]

Lesson / Activities

Practice Making Different Graph Types of Your Budget

1. Again, in the 2nd tab in the "Services" and "Budget" columns, you will have had students begin to build their budget and enter in the amounts they want to spend on each item.

For example, they may want 10 full time nurses, so they would type in "Full time nurse" into column "Services" and multiply \$100,000 times 10 (using the cost estimates from tab 1) to put \$1,000,000 into the "Budget" column for that item.
2. In the 3rd tab, Students will have copied and pasted the "Services" and "Budget" section (with all their spending) from Tab #2 into tab #3. All students need to do to create their graph is to highlight the entire "Services" and "Budget" section and click "insert chart" and choose "pie chart."
3. Now, have students go back, delete their pie chart and then highlight their "Services" and "Budget" table. Then click "Insert" and pick "chart." Encourage students to pick something other than the pie chart and decide which graphic representation best represents their priorities and advocacy.

4. Ask students to think, pair and share by showing one another in small groups their budget graphs and determine which representation best reflects their goals.
5. Come back as a class to show and tell what they've decided.

Closing

Analyze Alderman Jeanette Taylor's Critique

1. Have students review [Alderman Jeanette Taylor's critique of Mayor Lightfoot's budget](#) and share their responses to the following questions?
 - a. What resonated with you?
2. Tell students that they'll be advocating for change on CPS spending in tomorrow's lesson. Ask them to think about how they can make their voice heard in decisions about the allocation of CPS stimulus money? (slide 14)
 - a. How can you share this knowledge and information with other students across CPS? With parents and community?
 - b. What tools for outreach and activism will you use?
 - c. Some options: Social media / online petition / speak at a CPS meeting / submit a letter to your Local School Council / Op-Ed

Lesson 4

Lesson Objectives and Essential Questions

Objectives:

Students will be able to...

- use their consolidated budget preferences to identify one priority
- create an advocacy campaign to advance their priorities
- Identify priorities in a small group

Essential Question:

How can you work with others to promote student voice in the CPS budget process?

Warm-up

Tell students that they'll be advocating for change on CPS spending in today's lesson. Ask them to think about how they can make their voice heard in decisions about the allocation of CPS stimulus money by answering the following questions: (slide 14)

1. How can you share this knowledge and information with other students across CPS? With parents and community?
2. What tools for outreach and activism will you use?
3. Some options: Social media / online petition / speak at a CPS meeting / submit a letter to your Local School Council / Op-Ed
4. Who are 2-3 others in class you would like to work with to advance your advocacy? (Teachers can then group students based on interest / classroom dynamics, etc).

Focus text(s) / resource(s) for today's lesson

[Campaign document](#)

[Chicago Public Schools Budget Unit Presentation](#) (slides 14-16) [[PDF](#)]

Lesson / Activities

Preferred Form of Advocacy

1. Have students select your preferred form of advocacy. Students can pick more than one or add their own:
 - a. Social Media posts
 - b. Office Hours with a member of the Board of Education
 - c. Speak out at a Board of Education Meeting or City Council Meeting
 - d. Action or Protest
 - e. Opinion Editorial to a local newspaper
2. Once students have identified their preferred advocacy, place them or have them pick teams where they will pool together their collective talents and interests to influence the CPS budget process on their vital concerns.
3. Students must decide which version of their various budgets is the one they will all fight for before building out their action plan.
4. In groups, students should fill out their [campaign document](#) and then begin creating their action materials.

Introduce the Performance Task

1. Students will put their campaign plans in motion using the [Think Tac Toe](#) method. Explain that groups should complete one 5-point, one 10-point, one 15-point and one 20-point task. They need to choose one of each to complete the assignment.
2. Students worked on their advocacy for 3-5 periods. If you are teaching in person, this will go faster.

Educator Note: Encourage students to offer replacement activities if they want to create their own infographic, artistic rendering or additional creative efforts to advance their proposals. I have successfully convinced countless students to take action in ways they never have previously; whether that means speaking at a rally or creating a viral twitter post.

Sharing Action Plans

1. Ask students to share their action plans to the class.
2. Allow other groups to provide support and suggestions.

Engaging in Performance Task

1. Give students the following day to enact their initial steps and produce their posts / op-eds and other advocacy items.
2. After they have taken action, conduct a circle reflection where students can describe the following:
 - a. What they did
 - b. How they feel about it
 - c. The next steps they will take

Closing

Ask students to share their response to the following questions:

1. If future students had an opportunity to engage in a similar project, what would you change? Why?
2. What would you keep? Why?