THE CURRENT EVENTS CLASSROOM

WHAT IS THE DREAM ACT AND WHO ARE THE DREAMERS?

The DREAM Act (short for Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors Act) was a bill in Congress that would have granted legal status to certain undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children and went to school here. Although several versions of the bill have been introduced in Congress since 2001, it has never passed. In the last few years the term "DREAMer" has been used to describe young undocumented immigrants who were brought to the United States as children, who have lived and gone to school here, and who in many cases identify as American. The term DREAMer originally took its name from the bill in Congress, but it has a double meaning about the undocumented youth who have big hopes and dreams for a better future. This lesson provides an opportunity for students to learn more about the DREAM Act, reflect on different perspectives about it and identify their own opinion to defend in writing.

See these additional ADL resources: The Road to Comprehensive Immigration Reform, *Curriculum Connections* "Huddled Mass or Second Class? Challenging Anti-Immigrant Bias in the U.S.," Anti-Immigrant Movement Pushes State Strategies In 2014 and Advocacy Alert: Urge the House of Representatives to Support Immigration Reform with a Path to Citizenship.

Grade Level: grades 9-12

Common Core Anchor Standards: Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening

Learning Objectives:

- Students will learn about the DREAM Act and its background, history and current status.
- Students will reflect on different perspectives on the DREAM Act.
- Students will identify their point of view about the DREAM Act and write an essay reflecting that perspective.
- Students will connect their own dreams for the future to the young DREAMers' dreams for the future.

Material:

- Current State Laws and Policies on Access to Higher Education for Immigrants (National Immigration Law Center, www.nilc.org/eduaccesstoolkit2.html#maps)
- *The Dream is Now Launch* video (5 mins., The Dream Is Now Org), www.youtube.com/watch?v=u4x-Oq4mVqQ)
- *(Optional)* What is the Dream Act? (one for each student)
- "An American DREAM" (*Politico,* December 8, 2010, www.politico.com/news/stories/1210/46132.html)

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- "Why I Oppose the Dream Act" (*The Daily Caller*, December 20, 2010, http://dailycaller.com/2010/12/20/why-i-oppose-the-dream-act/)
- Paper or *Post-it*® Notes (at least five per student), approximately 3" x 5"

Advanced Preparation: Cut out pieces of paper about 3"x 5" (at least five per student) in the shape of circles or ovals or use *Post-it*® Notes.

Vocabulary:

Review the following vocabulary words and make sure students know their meanings. Go over the words prior to the lesson and reinforce the definitions as they come up during the course of the lesson. (See ADL's "Glossary of Education Terms.")

When you introduce the vocabulary for this lesson, explain to students that sometimes terms such as "illegal alien," "illegal immigrant," or just "illegal" are used to describe undocumented immigrants. This language is offensive because the words dehumanize the person. When a term such as "illegal" is used to describe a person, it sounds like one is saying that individual is unlawful or illegal, as opposed to the actions the person has taken. Even people who are convicted of crimes in the U.S. are not labeled "illegals." The term "illegal immigrant" was first used in 1939 as a slur by the British toward Jews who were fleeing the Nazis and entering Palestine without authorization. Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel said that "no human being is illegal."

- Alien
- Citizenship
- Congress
- Controversial
- Deportation
- Idealistic
- Immigrant
- Legislation
- Minor
- Senate
- Stereotype
- Undocumented

Note to Teacher:

It is important to reflect on and consider that you may have students in your classroom who are immigrants, undocumented immigrants or have family members who are undocumented immigrants. Be prepared and sensitive to those students, taking into consideration the extent to which they are a minority or majority of your classroom and plan accordingly. Further, it is possible that if the student has not shared this previously, she or he may disclose it during the course of the lesson. That information should only come from the student directly and be aware that young people do not always feel comfortable sharing this information with other people. If you have students in your class who fit into either of these categories and actually want to discuss their situations, talk with them in advance and figure out a way they can discuss this topic while feeling comfortable and safe.]

WARM UP: MY DREAMS

1. Distribute the pieces of paper prepared in advance or *Post-it*® Notes, at least five per student, to each student. Explain to students that you will be asking them to respond to questions about their dreams for the future. As you read the questions aloud, instruct them to write their answers on the pieces of paper. There are more questions than pieces of paper so students should choose which ones are most important to put on the papers. They can also jot down notes as they reflect on the questions and transfer their notes to the pieces of paper later.

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2. Ask students the following questions:
   - What are your dreams for the future?
   - Where do you hope to live when you graduate from high school? In your twenties?
   - Do you want to go to college? What would you like to study in college?
   - Are you interested in joining the armed services?
   - What jobs and careers interest you? What kind of job do you think you might want?
   - Do you want to get married and have children?
   - What do you hope to be doing when you are 20, 25, 30….?
   - Do you want to live in a city, the country, a small town or the suburbs?
   - What will your house or apartment look like?
3. After going through the questions, have students share their responses for each question by either stating them out loud, or posting them on the wall or both. After extensive sharing, ask: *What do you notice about everyone's dreams? How would you feel if there was something getting in the way of you working towards your dreams?*

INFORMATION SHARING: WHAT IS THE DREAM ACT?

1. Ask students: *Has anyone heard of the DREAM Act?* If students do not know, ask what they think it might be.
2. Tell students that the DREAM stands for "Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors." The Act part of DREAM Act means it is a bill, legislation or a law. Ask if they can infer what the bill is about based upon the description.
3. Provide this basic background about the DREAM Act. You can either share this information with students verbally or distribute the *What is the Dream Act?* handout have them read it.
   - The DREAM Act is a bill introduced in Congress that addressed the needs of undocumented young people who grew up in the United States and came to this country from other countries as children. Under current immigration law, most of these young people have no way to gain legal residency even though they have lived in the United States most of their lives and have graduated from high school in the U.S. The DREAM Act would provide a pathway to U.S. citizenship to certain undocumented youth who go to college or join the armed services. There have been a few versions of the DREAM Act introduced in Congress but none have passed yet.
   - It is estimated that only between 5–10% of undocumented high-school graduates go to college—not because they don't want to, but because they cannot afford it (and some schools won't allow them to enroll). Most are not eligible for in-state tuition and financial aid, both of which make college affordable. As a result, more than a dozen states have passed laws that offer in-state tuition rates for undocumented immigrants. However, only four states allow them to be eligible for financial aid—California, New Mexico, Washington and Texas. In terms of a path to citizenship, state laws cannot legalize the status of undocumented immigrants. Only the federal government can do that.

     Project or print out the map of Current State Laws and Policies on Access to Higher Education for Immigrants. Have students find their state and identify their state's laws and policies. Help students to explore the rest of the map and make note of patterns between states, which policies grant more

rights and privileges and the approaches different states take regarding higher education for immigrants.

- Each year about 65,000 undocumented students graduate from U.S. high schools and face uncertain futures due to their lack of legal status. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that by 2020, 700,000 children and young adults would be eligible to earn permanent residence under the DREAM Act, if it passes.
- On June 15, 2002, President Obama issued an executive order, "Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals," also known as DACA. This is a temporary measure to tackle some of the needs addressed in the DREAM Act. It enables certain people who came to the United States as children and meet several key guidelines to request consideration for deferred action. Deferred action is a relief from deportation in which the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) allows a non-U.S. citizen to remain in the country temporarily. In this case the deferred action is for a period of two years, subject to renewal, and recipients would then be eligible for work authorization. It allows temporary work permits and provides protection from deportation. A recent survey of about 1,000 DACA recipients nationwide found that most were taking concrete steps to move up in U.S. society. More than 60% had found a new job and obtained a driver's license. Over half had opened a bank account, and 38% had gotten a credit card, which they could not do previously without a legal ID.
- According to a 2010 survey conducted by First Focus called Public Support for the DREAM Act, 70% of Americans favor the DREAM Act, a notable increase in support compared to a similar 2004 poll that placed public support at 58%.

VIDEO: "THE DREAM IS NOW"

1. Show the video *The Dream is Now*. (There is also a 30-minute version of this video listed in the "Additional Reading and Resources" section below).
2. Engage students in a whole group discussion by asking these questions.
   - How did you feel while watching the video?
   - Who are the DREAMers and why are they called "DREAMers?"
   - What does it mean to "step out of the shadows?"
   - Why was it important for the DREAMers to state their names out loud and in public?
   - Why do some young people in this situation keep their status private?
   - Reflecting on your own dreams discussed at the beginning of the lesson, how do you feel about the dreams identified by the young people in the video?

READING ACTIVITY: DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE DREAM ACT

1. Students will read two articles with different perspectives on the DREAM Act. Divide the following two articles evenly between the students, assigning Article 1 to half the class and Article 2 to the other half:
   - Article 1: "An American DREAM" by Tim Kaine
   - Article 2:" Why I Oppose the DREAM Act" by Natasha Mayer
2. Allow students 10–15 minutes to silently read their articles. You may also give the reading assignment for homework and resume the lesson the next day. Instruct students to take notes on important points

in their articles and pay attention to the tone and strategies used to make their point. After reading the articles, have each group of students share information about their article, the points raised, and the perspective of the writer. As one group presents, the rest of the students should take notes on the points raised by the article.

3. Engage students in a whole group discussion by asking:
   - How did the point of view of the writer shape the article?
   - What new information did you learn by reading your article and hearing about the other one?
   - What specific strategies did the writer use to convey their point of view?
   - What evidence did the article present?
   - Did your position shift as a result of hearing different perspectives on the topic?
   - What more do you want to know?

WRITING ACTIVITY: ESSAYS ON THE DREAM ACT

1. Tell students they will now be writing their own essays about the DREAM Act and the essay should reflect their particular point of view. This can be assigned for homework or class time can be used to write, conference, edit and complete a final draft. Students should use information from the articles read in class and, if the essay is assigned for homework, they can collect and analyze additional evidence.

   NOTE: It is important to emphasize to students that in order to create a thoughtful argumentative piece of writing, their essays should consist of evidence to support their position. This evidence should include data, statistics and/or stories. Be aware of and directly address the potential for anti-immigrant stereotyping in their essays. Review the definition of stereotype, which is "an oversimplified generalization about a person or group of people without regard for individual differences. Even seemingly positive stereotypes that link a person or group to a specific positive trait can have negative consequences." Ask for examples of stereotypes and specifically stereotypes about immigrants and/or undocumented immigrants (e.g.: taking jobs from Americans, don't pay taxes, don't contribute to society). Make it clear to your students that any stereotyping of immigrants is unacceptable. They should only use evidence-based arguments and stories.

2. Their essays should be five paragraphs and one to two pages in length, and include:
   - Their stated position
   - Description of different positions of the issue
   - Evidence that supports their position (including quotes, background information, stories, statistics, etc.)
   - Summary of their position re-stated
3. Explain to students that using real life stories and anecdotes is an effective way to begin an op-ed or bring it to life later in the essay. (Explain that an op-ed is an essay in a newspaper, magazine or online that gives the opinion of the writer and is usually about major news events and current topics.) Encourage them to use DREAMers' stories by using some of the stories in the "Additional Reading and Resources: DREAMers' Stories" section below or stories from the video. These should be incorporated into their essays.

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4. After the students have completed their essays, ask for volunteers to read them aloud. Consider publishing them on a class blog about the DREAM Act, send them in to a local newspaper as an op-ed or re-write them as letters to their state or federal elected officials or as a Letter to the Editor for their local newspaper.

CLOSING

Have students complete the following sentence and state out loud: One thing I learned or re-learned about the DREAM Act is _____.

ADDITIONAL READING AND RESOURCES

- United We Dream
- "Immigrant Children in Legal Limbo" (*The New York Times,* April 22, 2009)
- Chasing the DREAM Act (Youth Communication)
- Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (U.S. Department of Homeland Security)
- The DREAM Act by the Numbers (Center for American Progress, December 17, 2010)
- A Nation of Immigrants (Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project, January 29, 2013)
- The DREAM Act (Immigration Policy Center)
- The Economic Benefits of Passing the Dream Act (Center for American Progress, October 2012)
- DREAM Act Summary (National Immigration Law Center, May 2011)
- Recommended Multicultural & Anti-Bias Books for Children: Immigrants (Anti-Defamation League)
- *The Dream is Now* (30 mins., The Dream is Now Org)

DREAMers' Stories

- The Dream is Now Stories (The Dream is Now Org)
- My Life as an Undocumented Immigrant (*The New York Times,* June 22, 2011)
- The Dreamers' dreams: Young immigrants tell their stories (*The Guardian,* July 12, 2012)
- More DREAM Act Stories (Dick Durbin US Senate Website)
- LGBT DREAMers' Stories (National Center for Lesbian Rights)
- "10 Dreamers' Stories You Should Know" (*Huffington Post,* November 18, 2013)

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COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS

Content Area/Standard
Reading
Standard 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
Standard 6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.
Writing
Standard 1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
Standard 5: Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.
Speaking and Listening
Standard 4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

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