

5.8 ADDING UP THE POINTS: MERIT-BASED IMMIGRATION POLICY

Essential Question(s): What is merit-based immigration policy, and how might it impact various people? Should the U.S. adopt merit-based immigration policy?

Overview

In 2017, President Trump announced the Reforming American Immigration for Strong Employment (RAISE) Act that would move immigration policy in the U.S. to be more like Canada and Australia. According to the Trump administration, the merit-based, or point-based, policy would protect small U.S. businesses and would create a safer nation. When this act was introduced, many people asked what merit-based immigration policy is and how it works.

Snapshot

What Students Will Learn:

In this lesson, students will learn about merit-based immigration while calculating their points based on Trump’s RAISE Act. Students will also write a persuasive essay based on merit-based immigration policy. If your students have done the previous unit, “Participation in Democracy,” have them connect their essay to what they learned from it.

Standard(s):

D2.Civ.13.9-12

Time: 50 minutes each



Objectives

- Understand merit-based immigration policy.
- Identify the pros and cons of a merit-based or family-based immigration policy.
- Outline a persuasive essay based on merit-based immigration policy.

Differentiation

The length of the essay can be shortened or made longer. Consider having a list of sources students can choose from for research.

What's Needed

- Writing utensil and paper or 1:1 technology
- WiFi, internet, computer, screen or projector, speakers
- Make enough copies of the first page of Massimiliano Tani's article "Using a point system for selecting immigrants" (IZA World of Labor, May 2014, <https://wol.iza.org/uploads/articles/24/pdfs/using-a-point-system-for-selecting-immigrants.pdf>), one for each student.
- (Optional) Prepare the information in step 10 as a slide.
- Make enough copies of "Adding Up the Points Worksheet" and "Merit-Based Immigration Essay Outline," one of each for each student.

Classroom Setup

Students will work individually and in small groups. Desks should be set up to best support collaboration.

Direct Teaching

1. Welcome students to class. Ask students to speculate what they think "merit" or points-based immigration might mean.
2. Share with students the following information:
In 2017, President Donald Trump cited the possibility of the U.S. using a merit-based immigration policy, referencing the Australian and Canadian immigration systems which prioritize immigrants with higher skills based on a system of points. Those in favor of merit-based immigration say that it's the fairest way to choose immigrants who will positively impact the country's economy.
3. Distribute the first page of Massimiliano Tani's article "Using a point system for selecting immigrants" to each student.

Key Vocabulary

immigration
merit
policy
system



4. Read through the page out loud, either reading it to the students or asking for volunteers to read various paragraphs. As it is being read, tell students to be ‘active readers,’ underlining important parts, and putting a “?” next to anything that is unclear to them. Take a few moments to analyze the graph as well.
5. Facilitate a brief discussion by asking some of the following questions:
 - What countries currently use a point system for immigration?
 - What does Tani say are the drawbacks to the point system?
 - What does Tani say are the pros to the point system?
6. Tell students that they need to create two questions about merit-based immigration based on the information provided by Tani. Provide time for students to write their questions.
7. Divide students into small groups of 2–3 and have them share their questions. Ask the small groups to identify 1–2 questions they as a group felt were most interesting.
8. Do a ‘wraparound,’ having each group share one of their questions to the whole group. Tell students to write down questions they hear from their peers that they find interesting, in addition to their original questions.
9. After each group has shared one question, allow groups to share other interesting questions they raised. Explain to students that they will have an opportunity to research answers to these questions.
10. Explain to students that they are going to participate in an activity that involves calculating points based on the Trump Administration’s RAISE Act. Share the following information with students, verbally and/or via a slide:
 - The RAISE Act, or Reforming American Immigration for Strong Employment Act, was introduced in 2017. The bill aims to reduce the levels of documented immigration to the U.S. by 50%. This would be done through a system of calculating points. The points were divided up based on age, education, job offer, English language ability and much more.
 - Today, you are going to calculate the qualifications of your favorite famous person based on Trump’s RAISE Act. After your calculation, respond to the prompt on the right side of the paper. If you aren’t sure your person meets those qualifications, you can Google them for information, or take your best guess.
11. Distribute the “[Adding Up the Points Worksheet](#)” to each student and provide them work time to complete it.
12. Facilitate a brief classroom discussion by asking some of the following questions:
 - Would your person be able to immigrate to the U.S. based on their score?
 - How did this scoring activity make you feel?
 - What are the pros of a system like this?
 - What are the cons of a system like this?
 - Do you think this is an inclusive and equitable system?
13. Explain to students that they are going to write a persuasive essay or poster either supporting or challenging merit-based immigration policy. They will need to compile their learning from this unit and previous units, as well as complete their own research.
14. Have students use the “[Merit-Based Immigration Essay Outline](#)” to plan out their persuasive essay or poster. Read through it with students, stopping to ask what questions students have.
15. Provide students a few moments to capture their main ideas for their project. What is not completed in class should be assigned as homework.

Closing

Do a S.I.T. strategy, having students share one thing they find **Surprising, Interesting, or Troubling** about merit-based immigration.

Extension Activity

Have students write a responsive essay answering these three questions: (1) What do you think is the current immigration policy?, (2) What do you think it should be?, and (3) Is there a gap between what you think it should be and what has been proposed?

ADDING UP THE POINTS WORKSHEET

Directions: Circle the qualification that best suits the famous person you are representing in each category. At the end, add the total number of points together. Note that the person must earn **30 points** to qualify for legal status under Trump's RAISE Act.

Qualification	# of Points Award
Age (in U.S. years)	
18-21	6
22-25	8
26-30	10
31-35	8
36-40	6
41-45	4
46-50	2
<18 or >50	0
English Ability (based on standardized test)	
<60 Percentile	0
60-80 Percentile	6
80-90 Percentile	10
>90 Percentile	11
100 Percentile	12
Awards	
Nobel Prize or equivalent	25
Olympic medal or equivalent	15

Qualification	# of Points Award
Education	
U.S. High School Diploma, or equivalent	1
Foreign Bachelor's Degree	5
U.S. Bachelor's Degree	6
Foreign Master's Degree (in STEM field)	7
U.S. Master's Degree	8
Foreign Doctorate Degree	10
U.S. Doctorate Degree	13
Job Offer (based on salary compared to median income, which was \$62,000 in 2018)	
Salary is at least 150% of median income (or at least \$102,000)	5
Salary is at least 200% median income (or at least \$124,000)	8
Salary is at least 300% of median income (or at least \$186,000)	13
Investment (into new commercial enterprise)	
Invest \$1.35 million	6
Invest \$1.8 million	12

Total # of Points Award

MERIT-BASED IMMIGRATION ESSAY OUTLINE

Directions: Based on your knowledge of the current immigration policy and your beginning knowledge about merit-based immigration policy, respond to the prompts below. You will need to do additional research to answer them. Use this outline to write your persuasive essay about merit-based immigration policy.

Family-Based Immigration (Current U.S. law)	
Pros	Cons

Merit-Based Immigration <i>(It may be helpful to research other countries who have merit-based immigration.)</i>	
Pros	Cons

1. Based on your research, do you believe the United States should have merit-based immigration? Why or why not?

2. Now that you have an argument, write a thesis statement:

3. What are the three strongest reasons why you either support, or do not support merit-based immigration?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

4. Where did you get your information from (what sources did you use)?
