



WHAT SHOULD BE DONE ABOUT DACA?

On September 5, 2017, President Trump ordered an end to the Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. This program shields some young undocumented immigrants—who often arrived at a very young age in circumstances beyond their control—from deportation. The President also urged Congress to pass a replacement before the administration begins phasing out DACA's protections in six months. This means that as early as March 2018, some of the 800,000 young adults brought to the U.S. as children who qualify for the program, will become eligible for deportation and lose access to education and work visas.

In 2012, President Obama issued the DACA executive order after the Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act did not pass in Congress several times. This was a temporary measure to tackle some of the needs addressed in the DREAM Act. It enables certain people who were brought to the U.S. as children (and who meet several key guidelines) to request consideration for deferred action. DACA is largely seen as successful and has assisted young people in a variety of ways, including attendance in school, higher education, employment and getting drivers' licenses. Further, voters overwhelmingly support allowing undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children to stay in the country.

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to learn more about DREAMers/DACA recipients, reflect on what it means to be "American," and write a persuasive letter to their representative in Congress.

[Note to Teacher: It is important to reflect on and consider that you may have students in your classroom who are immigrants, undocumented immigrants, and/or have family members who are undocumented immigrants or DACA recipients. 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 students have not shared this previously, they may disclose it during the course of the lesson. That information should only come from the student directly and 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 determine the best way for them to discuss this topic while feeling comfortable and safe.]

See these additional ADL resources: Multi-grade lesson plans "[Huddled Mass or Second Class?: Challenging Anti-Immigrant Bias in the U.S.](#)," "[What is the DREAM Act and Who are the Dreamers?](#)" and "[Sanctuary Cities and Non-Violent Resistance](#)," [Urge Congress to Support Fairness for Immigrant Children](#) and [Myths and Facts about Immigrants and Immigration](#)

Grade Level: grades 7–12

Time: 45 minutes

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

Learning Objectives:

- Students will understand what the DREAM Act is and how DACA benefits the recipients of the program.
- Students will explore what it means to be “American” and will share their own reflections on this question.
- Students will write a letter to their representative in Congress expressing their thoughts about what should be done about DACA.

Material:

- “Their lives were transformed by DACA. Here’s what will happen if it disappears.” (*The Washington Post*, September 4, 2017, www.washingtonpost.com/local/immigration/their-lives-were-transformed-by-daca-heres-what-will-happen-if-it-disappears/2017/09/04/a1a34574-8e75-11e7-91d5-ab4e4bb76a3a_story.html, one copy for each student)
- Construction paper (one for each student) and markers/colored pencils
- *Persuasive Letter Organizer*, one for each student

Compelling Question: Should DACA be saved?**Vocabulary:**

Review the following vocabulary words and make sure students know their meanings. (See ADL’s “[Glossary of Education Terms](#).”)

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|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| • citizen | • legislation | • renewable | • unprecedented |
| • compelling | • millennials | • rescind | • valedictorian |
| • deferred action | • opposition | • resident | • vigil |
| • deportation | • presidential overreach | • undocumented | • work permit |

INFORMATION SHARING: WHAT IS DACA AND WHO ARE THE DREAMERS?

1. Ask students: *Do you know what DACA (Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals) is? Can you guess based on the words? Do you know who “DREAMers” are and why they are called that?*
2. Elicit responses from students about the meaning of the words and then share the following information:
 - The DREAM Act was a bill introduced in Congress before 2010 that was meant to address the needs of undocumented young people who grew up in the United States and came to this country from other countries as children—often in circumstances beyond their control. These young people have grown up as Americans, identify themselves as Americans, and many speak only English and have no memory of or connection with the country where they were born. Under current immigration law, most of these young people had no way to gain legal residency even though they have lived in the U.S. most of their lives, many graduating from high school. The DREAM Act would have provided a pathway to U.S. citizenship to certain undocumented youth who go to college and/or

join the armed services as well as remained in good standing with the law. There have been a few versions of the DREAM Act introduced in Congress (the first one in 2001) but none have passed.

- Many DREAMers say they didn't know they were unauthorized immigrants until they were teenagers—often when they discovered they couldn't join their peers in getting a driver's license or filling out financial aid forms for college because they didn't have Social Security numbers.
- Because the DREAM Act didn't pass in Congress, in 2012 President Obama issued an executive order, "Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals," also known as DACA. It enables certain people who came to the U.S. as children and meet several key guidelines to request consideration for deferred action. The directive instructs the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to allow non-U.S. citizens who qualify to remain in the country for two years, subject to renewal. Recipients are eligible for work authorization and other benefits, and are shielded from deportation.
- Since the Obama Administration began DACA in 2012, 787,580 people have been approved for the program, according to the latest government figures. To be eligible, applicants had to have arrived in the U.S. before age 16 and lived here since June 15, 2007. They could not have been older than 30 when the Department of Homeland Security enacted the policy in 2012. DACA applicants have to provide evidence they were living in the U.S. at the prescribed times, proof of education and confirmation of their identities. They also had to pass background, fingerprint and other biometric checks that record identifying biological features. The fee to request DACA is \$495. Among the accepted applicants, Mexico is by far the biggest country of origin, followed by El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.
- DACA has been instrumental in improving DREAMers' lives in a variety of ways. A 2017 [national study](#) revealed that 91% of DACA respondents are currently employed. Their average hourly wage was \$17.46 an hour, up from \$10.29 before receiving DACA. Forty-five percent of respondents are currently in school and among those currently in school, 72% are pursuing a bachelor's degree or higher. Nearly 80% of respondents said they obtained driver's licenses, which is also a public safety improvement for all people.
- Voters overwhelmingly support allowing undocumented immigrants brought to the U.S. as children to stay in the country, according to a new [Politico/Morning Consult poll](#). Fifty-eight percent of voters think DREAMers should be allowed to stay and become citizens if they meet certain requirements. Another 18% think they should be allowed to stay and become legal residents, not citizens. Only 15% think they should be removed or deported. Support for allowing them to remain the U.S. spans across party lines: 84% of Democrats, 74% of Independents and 69% of Republicans think they should stay.
- On September 5, 2017, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that the Trump Administration was ending the Deferred Action on Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. He asserted that "the executive branch, through DACA, deliberately sought to achieve what the legislative branch specifically refused to authorize on multiple occasions. Such an open-ended circumvention of immigration laws was an unconstitutional exercise of authority by the Executive Branch." He urged Congress to pass a replacement before the administration begins phasing out its protections in six months.

3. Engage students in a brief discussion by asking the following questions:

- What were your feelings and thoughts as you learned this information?
- What did you learn that you didn't know before?
- Did anything challenge your prior knowledge or assumptions about DACA and DREAMers?
- What are your thoughts so far about what should be done about DACA?

READING ACTIVITY

1. Have students take out a piece of paper and then ask: *How do you define American? What does it mean to be American?* Then have students share their responses and record some or all of them on the board/smart board. Ask a few to share their thoughts about what they see on the board.
2. Distribute to each student a copy of the article, "[Their lives were transformed by DACA. Here's what will happen if it disappears.](#)" Give students ten minutes to read it.
3. Engage students in a discussion by asking the following questions:
 - What did you learn that you didn't know before?
 - What did you learn about some of the people whose lives were impacted by DACA?
 - Why did the Trump administration decide to rescind DACA?
 - Why is DACA referred to as a new embodiment of the "American Dream?"
 - What will be lost if DACA is rescinded and Congress doesn't come up with legislation to address DREAMers' situation?
 - After reading this article, what are your thoughts about DACA and what should happen next?

DEFINE AMERICAN

1. Explain that there is an organization that works with DACA recipients/DREAMers to provide important information to them and advocate on their behalves. The organization is called Define American because they contend that except for not being born in the U.S., DREAMers/DACA recipients are Americans in every other way.
2. Explain that Define American invites DACA recipients to share their story by writing a response to the question "How do you define 'American?'" and submitting a video. Watch a few of the videos which could include the following or from their [website](#).
 - [Giovanni Amado](#)
 - [Denea Joseph](#)
 - [Joaida Tornes](#)
 - [Joel Sati](#)
 - [Itzel Guillen](#)

NOTE: You can have the students watch some of the videos the night before for homework.)

3. After watching a few of the videos, engage students in a discussion by asking the following questions:
 - What was your impression of the people in the videos?
 - How has DACA helped them in their pursuits and dreams?
 - How did the DREAMers define American?
4. Ask students to consider everything they have learned so far and now respond to question again: *How do you define American?* Have students turn and talk with someone sitting next to them and share their thoughts on this question. Then, distribute pieces of construction paper and have students write a collection of words, phrases and images about what being American means to them. If time permits,

have each share their work with the rest of the class. Alternatively, have students all hold up their pieces of paper and look at each other's work.

5. Ask students the following questions:

- Was there a difference in how you described what an American is before reading the article and watching the videos?
- If so, what is different?
- Why do you think that happened?

WRITING ACTIVITY: LETTER TO MY CONGRESSPERSON

1. Remind students that in its announcement about rescinding DACA, the Trump administration urged Congress to pass a replacement of the DREAM Act and/or immigration reform before the administration begins phasing out its protections of DACA recipients in March 2018. Ask: *What do you want to tell your Congressional representative to do about DACA?*
2. As a culmination to the lesson, have students write a persuasive letter to their representative in Congress. If they don't know who their representative is, they can use [Find Your Representative](#). They should gather all of the information they learned about, read, and watched. They can also do their own additional research or use information from the Additional Reading and Resources section. They should then write a letter to their representative with their thoughts about what should be done about DACA and DREAMers. They can use the [Persuasive Letter Organizer](#) to help them outline their letters. This can be done in class or as a homework assignment, having students engage in the process of revising, editing and rewriting.

CLOSING

Have students share their letters aloud or, if incomplete, their thoughts about what they will say.

ADDITIONAL READING AND RESOURCES

- ["Congress Has Always Let Dreamers Down. Will This Time Be Any Different?"](#) (Slate, September 5, 2017)
- ["DACA by the Numbers: 15 Facts about the Youth Immigration Program Trump Could Soon Shut Down"](#) (Newsweek, August 30, 2017)
- ["DACA, explained: why Donald Trump holds the fate of a generation of immigrants in his hands"](#) (Vox, August 25, 2017)
- ["DACA has shielded nearly 790,000 young unauthorized immigrants from deportation"](#) (Pew Research Center, September 1, 2017)
- ["Poll: Majority opposes deporting Dreamers"](#) (Politico, September 5, 2017)
- ["Study: The Impact of Deferred Action For Childhood Arrivals \(DACA\) Program Repeal on Jobs"](#)
- ["US immigration: DACA and Dreamers explained"](#) (CNN Politics, September 5, 2017)

COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS

Content Area/Standard
Reading
Standard 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
Standard 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
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 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

PERSUASIVE LETTER ORGANIZER

Directions: Use this organizer to outline your persuasive letter before writing.

State your opinion/position about DACA. (*Should they be able to stay and what should be done about the situation?*)

Provide background information about the issue.

List at least three (3) main reasons that would convince someone of your position (use examples, statistics, quotes, etc.).

Indicate what those who have a different point of view might say.

Indicate what you might say in response.