CASES

CREATE YOUR OWN CASE STUDY

Case studies bring social issues to life for students; they are also a great way to make classroom discussion less abstract—by connecting curriculum to controversy.

These guidelines will help you prepare your own case study:

1. **Identify a local issue.** The issue should be of concern to the local community and have an element of controversy or conflict. Competing factions must ALL have good points. There's nothing as dull as a case study that ends with all the students reaching the same conclusion. Life isn't like that. Bland case studies—that don't reflect competing viewpoints—are death to interesting, constructive discussion. If all students agree, the case study or simulation doesn't reflect the real issues.

2. **Develop and write clear and concise points of view about the issue.** Gather information from experts, factions, or interest groups on at least two different sides of the issue.

3. **Set the stage.** Give students enough background information so that they'll understand the issue and relevant context. Even though the issue may be complex, keep the background as simple as possible. Students will be able to fill in the real complexities.

4. **Write in general terms.** Leave room so that students' own ideas can come through. Don't propagandize; don't steer your class toward a set solution (especially the real one). Students can often devise a better resolution to a problem than the government or its citizens are able to come up with.

5. **Keep your case study between one-half page and two pages in length.** No longer. To keep students' interest, you may want to add a visual.

6. **Write a set of questions.** Use the questions at the end of the case to help prompt and guide student inquiry and discussion.

7. **Follow through.** You can use the case study as a launching pad for student involvement in a local issue. After discussing the issue from several points of view, students are likely to be more objective in analyzing the problem and in devising a way that they can become involved.

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"Responsibility is the thing people dread most of all. Yet it is the one thing in the world that develops us. . . ."

—Frank Crane

Case Notes