# Guidebook for Implementing the Current Issues Series

## Support for District and School Leaders

# CHOICES PROGRAM
## BROWN UNIVERSITY

Thank you for your purchase of the Choices Program's Current Issues Series! This guide-book provides an overview of the series along with tips, resources, and links for you to use to introduce the series to your team members. If you have any questions about the series, please contact us at choices@brown.edu or 401-863-3155.

We encourage you to download and share this guidebook with your staff members.

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## Choices Program Goals

The Choices Program seeks to:

- Democratize knowledge and provide accessible educational resources in order to reach diverse classrooms in all corners of the United States and beyond.
- Create curriculum materials that foster the necessary skills for students and teachers to be critical consumers of information and engaged global citizens.
- Take advantage of new research and scholarship that provide new insight into the dynamics that shape the world.
- Challenge traditional narratives and broaden understanding of history and current events.
- Produce narratives that are relevant to all communities, including ones that have been underrepresented in high school social studies curriculum and programming.

## The Current Issues Series

The Choices Program's Current Issues Series provides teachers with curriculum units to support teaching about the most pressing current policy issues facing the United States and the world. These topics are too important to simply be confined to elite decision makers and thinkers, and the Choices Program seeks to develop curriculum that will help students to develop into thoughtful, engaged participants in the world around them.

Choices develops each curriculum unit in collaboration with faculty at Brown University. In addition to this cutting-edge scholarship, Choices Program curriculum units emphasize skills development and provide students with analytical tools that they can utilize throughout their academic careers and lives as citizens. Lessons in Choices curriculum units aim to develop a process of inquiry for students to develop and answer important questions, think critically about the world around them, and become engaged citizens.

Careful attention is given to providing historical background to current issues and illuminating the social, political, economic, and intellectual forces leading up to the present moment. The Current Issues Series curriculum units provide students with an understanding of the civic processes of governmental decision making, while also exploring civic engagement outside of the realm of government.

While all Current Issues units are organized similarly—each unit includes student readings with accompanying graphic organizers and study guides, lessons, and videos—they are not organized chronologically. We encourage your team to start by trying out a few lesson plans that interest them and align with their course objectives.

Please feel free to download and adapt this Introduction to the Current Issues Series slide presentation when you are ready to introduce your staff members to the series. If you are using the Digital Editions format of the Current Issues Series, be sure your teachers have access to this Digital Editions introductory video.

## Skills Found Across the Current Issues Series

Students who are immersed in multiple Current Issues units throughout the year will be able to:

- Evaluate diverse and conflicting perspectives;
- Analyze a range of primary sources, including various written documents, artifacts, works of art, and oral histories;
- Understand the role of secondary sources; consult and evaluate competing and complementary secondary sources;
- Analyze sources to determine their perspective, bias, and reliability:
  - Closely read sources and identify claims and evidence;
  - Develop evidence-based interpretations of sources;
  - Use multiple sources to corroborate information;
- Assess how values inform perspectives, policy choices, and decision-making;
- Build deliberative dialogue skills to learn how to engage in civil discussions about controversial issues;
- Develop speaking, listening, and persuasion skills when articulating their own viewpoints about contemporary policy issues;
- Understand the roles of individuals, groups, and institutions as well as elite decision makers in current events;
- Consider political, social, cultural, and economic perspectives and understand how these factors influence one another.

## Utilizing Diverse Lesson Formats to Reach All Learners

One of the advantages of having access to the entire Choices Program's Current Issues Series is that your staff can pick and choose from a variety of lesson types. These are some lessons that are not to be missed!

### Art as a Primary Source

Expressing Political Views Through Art, _Between Two Worlds: Mexico at the Crossroads_
Art and Politics: Ai Weiwei, _China on the World Stage: Weighing the U.S. Response_
Art as Political Expression, _Empire, Republic, Democracy: Turkey's Past and Future_
Artifacts as Primary Sources, _Nigeria: History, Identity, and Change_
History from Below: Creating a Virtual Museum, _Confronting Genocide: Never Again?_

### Literature Excerpts or Poetry as a Primary Source

U.S. and Soviet Propaganda, _Russia's Transformation: Challenges for U.S. Policy_
José Martí and His Legacy, _History, Revolution, and Reform: New Directions for Cuba_
Nigerian Historical Fiction, _Nigeria: History, Identity, and Change_

### Multiple Source Formats (Images, Art, Song Lyrics, Jokes, Poetry)

Promoting Human Rights Through Social Movements, _Competing Visions of Human Rights_
The Special Period: Cultural Expressions, _History, Revolution, and Reform: New Directions for Cuba_
Graffiti and Social Media in the Egyptian Revolution, _The Middle East: Questions for U.S. Policy_
Portrayals of the Soviet Threat, _The Challenge of Nuclear Weapons_
Cultural Responses to Dictatorship, _Nigeria: History, Identity, and Change_

**Films**
Films and Climate Change, *Climate Change and Questions of Justice*
Film Analysis, *The Challenge of Nuclear Weapons*

**Political Cartoons**
Interpreting Political Cartoons, *Responding to Terrorism: Challenges for Democracy*
Interpreting Political Cartoons, *The U.S. Role in a Changing World*

## What is the Options Role Play?

The Options Role Play is the key lesson found in nearly all Choices Program Current Issues units. The purpose of the Role Play is to provide students with an understanding of multiple viewpoints (called options) on the public policy issue in question, provide them with the strengths and weaknesses of each option, and illuminate the values that support each option. (See this engaging introductory activity: *Values and Public Policy*.) Students complete the Options Role Play in preparation for clarifying and writing their own option or viewpoint on the issue.

The Role Play is engaging, student driven, and highly interactive. It builds a multitude of skills, including speaking and listening skills, persuasive argument development, collaboration, and critical thinking and analysis.

The Role Play can be thought of as four distinct parts: 1) Small group preparation for the Role Play, 2) the Role Play itself, where students present their assigned option and clarifying questions are asked, 3) the deliberative dialogue discussion, where students drop their assigned roles, and finally 4) the writing of one's own "option."

Each Current Issues Series unit contains step-by-step instructions to guide teachers through each part, and includes graphic organizers and supporting materials specific to the unit's role play. Please see this instructional video for more tips. The following video time stamps can direct you to the parts most relevant to your needs:
00:09 - Introduction to the Options Role Play for Current Issues units
00:52 - Video outline
01:11 - Overview of the Options Role Play for Current Issues units
02:26 - Beginning of the step-by-step description
02:30 - Setting your goals for the Options Role Play
02:57 - Options Role Play, Part 1: Option Group presentations and questions
06:15 - Options Role Play, Part 2: The deliberative dialogue phase
07:45 - Options Role Play, Part 3: Writing the personal option
08:33 - Concluding reminders

This video of an actual role play may also be helpful. Please note that while this video shows a role play based on a curriculum unit about North Korea, that unit has been retired.

Many teachers also like to create their own graphic organizers to emphasize certain skills to meet specific classroom goals. Appendix A contains an example of a simple teacher-created note-taking sheet for use during the role play. Appendix B contains a teacher-created organizer that asks deeper questions about the options in a role play. Feel free to download and adapt to your own needs!

## Assessment

There are several ways that teachers can assess student learning from the Role Play. Many teachers assess each of the four components listed above: small group preparation, small group presentation, whole group deliberative dialogue discussion, and the individual writing of the personal option.

Appendix C contains a sample assessment, created by a teacher, that assesses group work and individual contributions. Appendix D contains another teacher-created assessment. This one focuses more on individual contributions. This type of rubric would be best for assessing an individual's contribution to the deliberative dialogue discussion and/or a student's written personal option.

## Options for the Role Play

If several Choices Program units will be used in different courses, you may want to try out some of our favorite alternative formats for the Role Play. Some of these suggestions require students to be familiar with all of the options, while others require students to understand only one option.

**1. Question/Comment/Concern** - For younger students, simply writing a question, a comment, and a concern about each option can be good preparation for a short deliberative dialogue.
**2. Advertising Campaign** - Students can develop an effective advertising campaign to promote their assigned option to the general public.
**3. Political Cartoon** - Students can use their artistic talents and draw on their knowledge of symbolism and allegory to create a political cartoon for each option.
**4. Four Corners Debate** - Label each corner of the room with Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree signs. Present students with statements at the center of the options framework and have them stand in the corner that matches their perspective on the statement. They then have three minutes to work as a group to come up with a pitch to convince others to join their group.
**5. Radio Talk Show** - Students can present their option using a radio talk show format. Students who are not part of an option group but have instead been assigned a questioner role (usually these are Senators) would be members of the audience who call into the program with challenging and critical questions about the option that is being discussed.
**6. Collaborative Newspaper Editorial** - Students can persuasively advocate for their option in a collaborative newspaper editorial.
**7. Socratic Seminar/Fishbowl Discussion** - Students can engage in a student-driven discussion that explores the strengths and weaknesses of each option.
**8. Policy Recommendations** - Students can skip the oral presentations and deliberative dialogue parts and instead work individually or in small groups to write U.S. policy recommendations from the perspective of each option.

## Deliberative Dialogue

All Role Plays in Choices Current Issues units are designed to build students' deliberative dialogue skills. A deliberative dialogue discussion takes place at the conclusion of the Role Play. The deliberative discussion will help students prepare to write their own policy option.

## What is deliberation?

When we have to make an important decision, we deliberate. We consider a range of alternatives and weigh the advantages as well as the tradeoffs of each. After thinking through the issue, we try to make the best possible choice, the one that best answers our particular needs. It may not be perfect, but it is informed by all of the information that we can bring to the decision at that time.

When we deliberate with others, the process is collaborative and involves more than just one person's perspective. At its best, this is what a jury is expected to do. It is also what Congress is supposed to do when considering the passage of a piece of legislation. Deliberation requires a commitment on the part of all who enter into the process to **listen** to the perspectives and the knowledge of others, and to try to learn from one another.

## How is deliberation different from debate?

Debate is a competitive process in which there are two sides: a winner and a loser. Ideas are not built; rather, they are contested. In a debate, you hold onto your position with the intent that you will "win" the argument.

In a deliberation, everyone expects to end up in a different place as a result of the discussion. Each person contributes knowledge and perspective to the whole, **listening** to one another and building on the contributions of others. By engaging in shared ideas, everyone grows in his or her knowledge and understanding. Deliberation is a collaborative process. The aim of deliberation is to share perspectives and knowledge and to build ideas, not to simply defend them.

## What is the difference between a discussion, a debate, and a deliberation in the classroom?

| Discussion | Debate | Deliberation |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Lacks facts (Tends to be based on opinions rather than facts) | Ownership of and defending one position | Research is more focused on the essential question without stifling broad connections across time or subjects |
| An outcome isn't always necessary | Implies winners and losers | Considers all the options by weighing the pros and cons |
| Can lead to many tangents and deviations from the topic | Doesn't allow for the consideration of multiple topics and/or influencing agents | Presents various viewpoints in an organized manner. |
| Role of the teacher: facilitator or leader | Role of the teacher: moderator or monitor | Role of the teacher: facilitator |

Developed by the Center for the Study of Global Change at Indiana University-Bloomington as part of a Carnegie grant to the Choices for the 21st-Century Education Program (now Choices Program).

## Why is it important to know how to deliberate?

It is important to know how to deliberate because **it is a cornerstone of democracy, and our students will be running the country very soon!** We all know why debate skills are useful. We use these skills when we want to persuade another of the merits of our ideas. But what if our ideas are not fully formed? What if the issue is complex and involves multiple interests and more than two sides? How do you generate new approaches that address multiple needs? This calls for careful listening and openness to the knowledge and the views of others.  It requires building new ideas and new approaches together. This is deliberation. **Learning these skills increases the capacity of students to participate fully in democracy. It is the basis of civic literacy.**

## Selected Guidelines for Deliberation

- Speak your mind freely, but don't monopolize the conversation.
- **Listen carefully to others.** Try to really understand what they are saying and respond to it, especially when their ideas are different from your own.
- Avoid building your own argument in your head while others are talking. If you are afraid you'll forget a point, write it down.
- Remember that deliberation is about sharing ideas and building new ones.
- Try to put yourself in someone else's shoes. See if you can make a strong case for an argument with which you disagree. Are there things you can appreciate about that perspective?
- Help to develop one another's ideas. Listen carefully and ask clarifying questions. For example, "Can you explain further what you meant by ..."
- Paraphrase each other to confirm understanding of others' points. For example, you may say, "So are you saying..."
- Build off of each other. Refer specifically to other deliberators and their ideas. For example, you might start your comment by saying, "As _____ said, I think we need to look at the issue of..."
- Be open to changing your mind. This will help you really listen to others' views.
- When disagreement occurs, don't personalize it. Keep talking and explore the disagreement. Look for the common concerns beneath the surface.
- Be careful not to discredit another person's point of view. For example you may raise a new concern by asking, "I share your concern that..., but have you considered...?"
- Remember that although you are trying to listen to and build on each other's ideas it doesn't mean that everyone has to end up in the same place.
- Do not be afraid to say you don't know or to say you've changed your opinion.

Deliberation skills need to be taught and practiced. Appendix E contains a sample worksheet that can help your students prepare for their first deliberation.

## For More Information

If you or your staff members have questions about the Current Issues Series, please contact us. We also invite you to attend a Choices Program professional development offering.

Thank you to Massachusetts teacher Amy Howland for the teacher-created materials in the Appendices.

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## Appendix A - Preparing for Deliberation Worksheet

Student's Name:

To help you prepare to engage in deliberation with your fellow class members, please complete the questions below. Your participation should not be limited to what you write down, but the following questions should help jumpstart your thinking around the issue.

1. The issue/question under deliberation is:

    a. The options presented on this issue were:
        1.
        2.
        3.
        4.

    b. The broader issue is:

2. What terminology must I understand in order to have a meaningful discussion about the issue?

3. What factors need to be considered before deciding on a course of action on this issue?
    (e.g., existing treaties/agreements, potential threats, costs, etc.)  Explain each.

4. What things am I still confused about and need to learn more about before formulating a position on the issue?

5. What questions can I ask that will help me better understand the issue?
    (Come up with at least two questions.)
        1.
        2.

6. What points of this issue do I feel most strongly about? Why?

7. Which viewpoint on this issue do I least appreciate or agree with? Why?

8. What questions can I ask that will help me to better understand this viewpoint with which I disagree? (Come up with at least two questions.)
        1.
        2.

# Appendix B - Analyzing the Options in a Role Play

| Question | Option 1 | Option 2 | Option 3 | Option 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Where do you see ideology guiding the goals and policies of this option? | | | | |
| What security concerns are driving the goals and policies of this option? | | | | |
| What economic concerns are at work? | | | | |
| What kind of power is most at work in this option – hard power (i.e., threats, coercion) or soft (persuasion through diplomacy)? | | | | |
| What appears to be the relationship between domestic developments and American foreign policy? | | | | |
| What appear to be this option's perceptions about the United States? How do these perceptions influence its policies? | | | | |
| What trade-offs does this option seem to be willing to make? | | | | |

# Appendix C - Options Role Play - Note-Taking Sheet

Listen to the options presented and record important claims, perspectives, and questions.

| Option 1 | Option 2 |
|---|---|
| Claims:<br><br>Perspectives:<br><br>Questions: | Claims:<br><br>Perspectives:<br><br>Questions: |
| **Option 3** | **Option 4** |
| Claims:<br><br>Perspectives:<br><br>Questions: | Claims:<br><br>Perspectives:<br><br>Questions: |

| Citizens/Senators/Questioners |
|---|
| |

## Reflection

Which option group did the best job presenting? Why?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Which option comes closest to your views? Why?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

# Appendix D - Assessment of the Options Role Play

Option Group Number:

Group Members:

| Group Assessment | Excellent | Good | Average | Needs Improvement | Unsatis-factory |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The group made good use of its preparation time. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| The presentation reflected an accurate summary of the option and an analysis of the issues. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| The presentation was coherent and persuasive. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| The group incorporated relevant quotes from the readings or videos into its presentation. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| The group's presenters spoke clearly, maintained eye contact, and tried to hold the attention of their audience. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| The presentation incorporated contributions from all the members of the group. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Student's Name:
(Complete one for each group member.)

| Individual Assessment | Excellent | Good | Average | Needs Improvement | Unsatis-factory |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The student cooperated with other group members. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| The student was well-prepared to meet his or her responsibilities. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| The student made a significant contribution to the group's presentation. | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| The student made meaningful, respectful comments during the deliberative dialogue discussion | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

# Appendix E - Option Role Play Rubric

| | Exemplary - 10 points | Adeqaute - 8 points | Ineffective - 6 points |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Argument: Clear Claim** *SL4* | Student presents a thoughtful, clear and concise argument. | Student mostly presents a clear argument. | Student's argument is illogical or unclear. |
| **Argument: Clear and Logical Explanation** *SL4* | There was no room for mis-interpretation because ideas were well explained and logical. | The audience may have some questions because the expla-nation was incomplete. | The argument is hard to follow because the explana-tion is missing, confusing, or illogical. |
| **Argument: Specific and Relevant Evidence** *SL4* *SL2* | Specific and relevant evi-dence is used to illustrate and support the argument, which demonstrates clear under-standing of audience and task. | Some evidence is used but it is not strong or specific enough to be fully convinc-ing or is not focused on the audience or task. | Argument is unsupported or is vaguely supported. Little proof is offered. |
| **Questions and Responses** *SL2* *SL3* *SL1.c* | Student asks thoughtful questions that challenge other students' assumptions and conclusions, and demon-strates their ability to integrate knowledge from multiple sources.<br><br>Responses show synthesis of information and make connections between options and multiple texts. | Student asks relevant ques-tions and demonstrates knowledge of the content but may lack synthesis from multiple sources.<br><br>Responses are thoughtful but may lack critical analysis and synthesis of information and multiple sources. | Questions are confusing and/or off topic and show little understanding of sources beyond the op-tion handout.<br><br>Responses are lacking in detail and thought or do not address the question. |
| **Comprehension** | Student shows a clear under-standing of the content and uses ample concrete evi-dence. | Student mostly understands the content and uses some general evidence. | Student does not truly under-stand the content. |
| **Persuasion** *SL6* *SL1.d* | Student speaks to the specific audience interests and uses both their viewpoint and alternate viewpoint. | Student addresses general audience concerns and may not use evidence from oppos-ing viewpoint. | Student may not address au-dience concerns and ignores opposing viewpoints. |
| **Presentation style** | Student displays appropriate volume and body language. Student is completely en-gaged. | Student mostly displays correct volume and body language. Student is mostly engaged. | Student cannot be under-stood. Student is disengaged or only somewhat engaged. |
| **Group Work** *SL1* | Student helped others and worked diligently in a group. En-tire group was prepared and on task. All students understood their roles. | Student stayed on task in group work and mostly worked as team player. Most of the group was prepared and on task. Most of the group understood their roles. | Student was often off task and not helpful in the small group. Student was unpre-pared and did not understand their role. |

Total Score: _____ /80