



*"We had enough tools to feel like there was a lot of structure, but enough flexibility to allow us to tailor the work to fit our work and be relevant to our community."*

- Belinda, Comité de Derechos Humanos Digna Ochoa, San Diego

# EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO THE EQUAL VOICE YOUTH EMPOWERMENT TOOLKIT



*"I like the breakdown of the high-priority issues for teens (the general idea of 'empowering youth' is so broad and kids can take it so many different directions)."*

- Amanda Boege,  
middle school teacher in Brooklyn

## About This Guide

This Educator's Guide is one of many resources developed as part of Marguerite Casey Foundation's Equal Voice Youth Empowerment Project. This nationwide effort, developed by Active Voice and inspired by Marguerite Casey Foundation's Equal Voice for America's Families campaign, is designed

to highlight the foundation's belief in the value of creating an "equal voice" for all, including youth. This guide is designed to help educators take maximum advantage of *Maria Full of Hope* and the Equal Voice Youth Empowerment Toolkit for classroom use. The format allows users to easily identify which sections of the Toolkit are right for them and customize their class sessions accordingly. A PDF of the Youth Empowerment Toolkit, available in both English and Spanish, can be downloaded at [www.caseygrants.org/hope/learn.html](http://www.caseygrants.org/hope/learn.html).

## At-a-Glance

This guide is designed to help high school students better understand their roles as citizens and the value their voices add to public discourse. Therefore, the activities outlined in this guide are helpful curriculum supplements to courses in:

- Civics
- Humanities
- Social Studies
- Service Learning
- US Government
- US History

The activities are also valuable additions to after-school and advisory programs designed to get youth engaged in community efforts addressing local concerns.

*"I love the empowerment activities starting on page 24 of the Toolkit!"*

- Rachel Herbert,  
high school teacher in San Francisco



### IN THIS GUIDE YOU'LL FIND:

- 2 **QUICK TIPS FOR IN-CLASS USE OF FILM** to help teachers make the most of *Maria Full of Hope* in the classroom
- 2-5 **CLASSROOM-READY ACTIVITIES** designed as stand-alone or weeklong sessions
- 2-5 **SUGGESTED INTRODUCTORY AND FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES** to help deepen the impact of class sessions
- 6-7 **GLOSSARY** designed as a handout to help more junior students work through difficult text
- 8 **IN-CLASS LOGISTICS CHECKLIST** to help teachers in their lesson planning

## Quick Tips for In-Class Use of Film

The video centerpiece of the Equal Voice Youth Empowerment Project is *Maria Full of Hope* (17:00), an inspiring story about one young woman as she reflects on her challenging past, joins a local community organization and becomes an inspiring leader battling the dropout crisis in Chicago. Some of the activities in the Toolkit draw upon her story. The documentary is available online at [www.caseygrants.org/hope](http://www.caseygrants.org/hope), where you can also get information about accessing a DVD (while supplies last). If you decide to show the film in your class as a prompt, consider the following tips:

- **Use the In-Class Logistics Checklist** on p. 8 to guide your planning.
- **Use the discussion prompts** on pp. 10–12 of the Toolkit to help students connect Maria's story to their own lives.
- **Begin with "Getting the Conversation Started"** on p. 11 of the Toolkit immediately after the film has ended. Those first few moments are powerful, so help students process what they learned before bathroom breaks or other interruptions.
- **Go deeper** and dive into one of the Empowerment Activities, which are good follow-ups to the film (see the pop-outs below for more tips).
- **Be prepared with follow-up suggestions.** Screenings of the film around the country have revealed that Maria's story is very effective in inspiring and motivating young people, so be ready to help them get involved after the screening.

## Classroom-Ready Activities

The following sections appear in the Youth Empowerment Toolkit. For each section we've included a set of suggested activities that teachers, advisers and after-school educators can easily incorporate into their existing curriculum. The activities can be used individually or organized into a weeklong lesson.

### Suggested Weeklong Youth Empowerment Lesson Plan

**Suggested grades:** 11–12\*

**Time needed:** 45–60 minutes per class session

- Class 1:** Screen *Maria Full of Hope* and discuss. See "Quick Tips" on p. 2 of this guide to help you design the most effective post-screening discussion. (45–60 min.)
- Class 2:** Part I: Lead the Empowerment Activity Self-Discovery: Who Am I? (25 min., Toolkit p. 25)  
Part II: Lead the Empowerment Activity Where Do You Stand? (30–45 min., Toolkit p. 26)
- Class 3:** Split the class into four groups to tackle the High-Priority Issues for Young People activity. See pp. 2–4 of this guide. (60 min., Toolkit pp. 13–21)
- Class 4:** Guide students through the Young Organizers Make a Difference activity. See p. 4 of this guide. (20 min. per example, Toolkit pp. 22–23)
- Class 5:** Lead one or more exercises from the Empowerment Activity Creating a Blueprint: How Do We Move Forward? (Toolkit p. 29). If you decide to guide students through each exercise in this Empowerment Activity, be advised this could take several class sessions, so plan accordingly.



**Bonus Homework Activity:** Consider assigning the Young Organizers Make a Difference activity as homework the night before Class 4. Then lead the activity Building Cohesion: Understanding & Strengthening Our Community during Class 4 (Toolkit pp. 27–28).

\*This plan can be easily adapted for 9th or 10th graders. Suggested modifications for younger students appear in following sections.

## High-Priority Issues for Young People (Toolkit pp. 13–21)

This section of the Toolkit goes well with collaborative or independent class service-learning projects. Instead of breaking the class into groups by issues, as suggested below, consider spending four class sessions on this section, covering each issue together as a class.

**Suggested Grade:** 12 and first-year college (see grade-level modifications below for younger students)

**Time Needed:** 60 minutes

**Handouts:**

- Consider printing the relevant starred pages in their entirety; or copy and paste from the PDF, ideally, the first paragraph and “Fast Facts” of each issue area you plan to cover in class
- Copy and paste the Critical Reading questions below into a document you can distribute

**Key Learning Goals:**

- Critical reading and reasoning
- Evaluation of argument logic and merits
- Vocabulary development
- Consensus-based decision making
- Oral presentation

**Directions:** Below is a suggested class activity for each topic in the High-Priority Issues activity (Education, Immigration, Juvenile & Criminal Justice, Jobs & Opportunity):

**Introductory Activity:** Consider using the *Where Do You Stand?* activity (Toolkit p. 26) to introduce the High-Priority Issues for Young People activity as a way to warm students up.



**1. Introduction:** Read the first paragraph of the issue section together as a class. (10 min.)

**Suggested modification for younger students:** Consider spending 20–30 minutes reading the selection as a class. Remember to hand out the glossary to help students go over difficult vocabulary. Or assign the reading selection for homework the night before to prepare students for the discussion.

**2. Critical Reading:** Write on the board the following questions from the issue area you are covering and divide the class into small groups to discuss. (15 min.)

**Suggested modification for younger students:** Consider allotting 20–25 minutes for the small-group discussions.

**Education**

- According to the passage, why are some young people having a harder time learning and becoming productive, successful citizens?
- What key points in the first paragraph do the Fast Facts support?

**Immigration**

- According to the passage, what hardships do young undocumented immigrants face as a result of recent legislation in states around the country?
- What key points in the first paragraph do the Fast Facts support?

**Juvenile & Criminal Justice**

- According to the passage, historical inequalities and lack of access to quality legal services make people from low-income communities susceptible to certain things. What are they?
- What key points in the first paragraph do the Fast Facts support?

**Jobs & Opportunity**

- According to the passage, why is there an enormous opportunity within this struggle?
- What key points in the first paragraph do the Fast Facts support?

**Suggested Follow-Up Activity:** Consider using the activity *Creating a Blueprint: How Do We Move Forward?* (Toolkit pp. 29–33) as a follow-up to the High-Priority Issues for Young People activity to help students deepen their learning.



**3. Policy Analysis:** Ask students to read the Policy Changes Families Need Now passage and to then address the following questions in their small groups. (20 min.)

**Suggested modification for younger students:** Consider allotting 20–25 minutes for the small-group discussions.

**Suggested modification for older students:** Deepen the lesson and assign further reading as homework or in preparation for the class. Check out the Read Up sections on Toolkit pp. 15, 17, 19 and 21 for suggestions.

- According to the passage, why is this issue important? Do you have anything to add based on your own experience? Is this issue a high priority for you? Why or why not?
- Which, if any, of the suggested policy changes do you think would help the most and why? Try to come to an agreement as a group and prepare to defend your choice to the class in 2–3 minutes.

**4. Report Back:** Ask each group to present and defend the policy changes they chose. (2–3 min. per group, 15 min. total)



**Suggested Homework:** Print the Additional Resources section corresponding to the issue area covered in class and ask students to pick one resource, go to the link provided and prepare a paragraph statement about (1) how that resource addresses the issue, (2) how students can get involved, and (3) anything new they learned about the issue in their research of the site.

### Young Organizers Make a Difference (Toolkit pp. 22–23)

**Suggested Grade:** 12 (see grade-level modification for younger students)

**Time Needed:** 20 minutes per example

**Handouts:**

- Print the relevant starred pages in the Toolkit or if you prefer to focus on one example only, copy and paste the text from the PDF to create a handout for each success story

**Key Learning Goals:**

- Rights and responsibilities of citizenship
- Critical reading and reasoning
- Oral presentation
- Vocabulary development
- Exploring topic of interest through formation of original questions

**Directions:** Distribute the handout, and ask students to read the different examples of youth making real changes. Then guide them through the following directions for each example:

#### **Example 1: Undocumented Youth in Illinois Pass DREAM Legislation**

1. Read the passage in its entirety.
2. Underline the problem that the youth in Illinois are trying to address.
3. Circle the actions that the youth took to address the problem.
4. Why did students decide to address this problem in the way that they did? What was the strategy?

**Suggested Follow-up Activity:** Consider using the Empowerment Activity Building Cohesion: Understanding & Strengthening Our Community (Toolkit pp. 27–28) as a follow-up to the Young Organizers Make a Difference session to help students apply what they've learned to their own community contexts.



**Example 2: Young Researchers in California Advance Education Policy**

1. Read the passage in its entirety.
2. Underline the problem that the young researchers are trying to address.
3. Circle the actions that the young researchers took to address the problem.
4. Create a mini research project of your own. If you could ask other students in your class three questions about their experiences around preparing for college, what would those questions be?

**Example 3: Young Advocates Close Down a Juvenile Detention Center in Louisiana**

1. Read the passage in its entirety.
2. Underline the problem that the young advocates in Louisiana are trying to address.
3. Circle the actions that the young advocates took to address the problem.
4. Why were the testimonials of young people so important in this campaign? Based on what you know and in your opinion, what value do you think they added?

**Suggested modification for younger students:** Consider doing the activities for each example together as a class to allow ample time to look up vocabulary in the glossary and ensure reading comprehension.

*“Maria Full of Hope was an integral tool to help youth see that they are facing the same issues even if they were not aware of it.”*

- Juan Llamas, Weingart East LA YMCA



## Glossary

**advocate** (verb) – to support or recommend publicly

**affluent** (adjective) – having an abundant supply of money or possessions of value

**alienate** (verb) – to make indifferent, unfriendly or hostile

**apprenticeship** (noun) – method by which a trainee learns a craft or trade through hands-on experience working with a skilled worker

**autonomy** (noun) – the quality or state of being self-governing

**catalyst** (noun) – a person or thing that brings about an event or change

**coalition-building** (noun) – a coalition is an alliance or union among groups, especially for a specific reason. Coalition-building is the act or process of bringing about such an alliance.

**comprehensive** (adjective) – covering completely or broadly

**concentration** (noun) – the property of being crowded together in a particular area

**consensus** (noun) – general or widespread agreement

**delinquency** (noun) – violation of the law or accepted behavior; especially as committed by youth

**democracy** (noun) – (a) government by the people, especially rule of the majority; (b) a government in which power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections

**dilapidated** (adjective) – in a state of partial ruin, decay or disrepair

**disproportionate** (adjective) – too large or too small in relation to something else

**fossil fuel** (noun) – resources, such as petroleum, coal and natural gas, that are the accumulated remains of ancient plants and animals

**helm** (noun) – position of leadership or control

**inadequate** (adjective) – insufficient to fulfill a need or meet a requirement

**infringe** (verb) – to violate or break (a law, an agreement, a boundary, etc.)

**innovative** (adjective) – using or showing new methods or ideas

**integral** (adjective) – essential or necessary for completeness

**internship** (noun) – a formal program to provide practical experience for beginners in an occupation or profession

**labor union** (noun) – an organization of workers formed to help them work together as a group to negotiate with employers over wages, hours, benefits, job security and working conditions

**legislation** (noun) – a proposed or enacted law or group of laws

**lobby** (verb) – to try to influence the thinking of lawmakers or other public officials for or against a specific cause

**minority** (noun) – a group having little power or representation relative to other groups within a society

**movement** (noun) – a group of people with a common belief system, especially a political or religious one

**naturalize** (verb) – to grant the rights of a citizen to someone who was not born in the country

**postsecondary** (adjective) – any education beyond high school

**preventive, preventative** (adjective) – intended or used to act as an obstacle

**proficient** (adjective) – having or showing knowledge and skill

**publicly financed** (adjective) – paid for by taxpayer dollars

**recession** (noun) – a period of general economic decline

**recidivism** (noun) – a tendency to relapse into criminal or delinquent behavior. In the context of the juvenile justice system, this often refers to a tendency of youth who have been in juvenile detention at some point to return to the juvenile detention system

**respectively** (adverb) – separately in the order given

**rigorous** (adjective) – demanding strict attention to standards, rules and/or procedures

**school to prison pipeline** (noun) – describes a trend in the United States in which children often end up in the juvenile and criminal justice systems either while in public school or immediately after

**strife** (noun) – heated, often violent conflict

**subpar** (adjective) – not measuring up to traditional standards of performance, value or production

**testimonial** (noun) – a statement in support of a particular truth, fact or claim

**unattainable** (adjective) – impossible to achieve

**undocumented immigrant** (noun) – a person who is in the United States without the permission of the US government

**unprecedented** (adjective) – having no previous example; unparalleled

**vocational** (adjective) – of or relating to applied educational courses concerned with skills needed for an occupation, trade or profession

**wages** (noun) – payment for labor or services to a worker, especially on an hourly, daily or weekly basis

**zero tolerance** (noun) – a policy of automatic punishment for the breaking of a rule, regardless of the circumstances; zero-tolerance policies can result in suspension or expulsion

## In-Class Logistics Checklist

### Preliminary planning: 3–4 weeks prior

- Optional: Become a fan of Equal Voice for America's Families Facebook page to learn about events, other developments and opportunities. Visit: [www.facebook.com/EqualVoiceNews](http://www.facebook.com/EqualVoiceNews)
- Download the Equal Voice for America's Families National Family Platform for background on the campaign. Available here: [www.caseygrants.org/equalvoice/equal-voice-for-americas-families-campaign/national-family-platform](http://www.caseygrants.org/equalvoice/equal-voice-for-americas-families-campaign/national-family-platform)
- Visit the Equal Voice Youth Empowerment website to learn more about the project and other resources. Visit: [www.caseygrants.org/hope](http://www.caseygrants.org/hope)
- If you plan to use *Maria Full of Hope*, watch it in its entirety in advance to help you decide how to best customize the class session around Maria's story.

### Logistical planning (for screenings only): 2–3 weeks prior

- If you're showing *Maria Full of Hope*, either online or on DVD, request the equipment for your classroom (speakers and projector/screen or TV/DVD player).
- Important: Test-screen the film in advance of showing it in the classroom to make sure there aren't any glitches.

### Final planning: 1 week prior

- Be sure to look at the discussion questions on pp. 10–12 of the Toolkit to help make the most of the screening (if applicable).
- Print out your handouts, which may include:
  - Glossary
  - Any of the starred pages of the Toolkit
  - A printout of the dialogue guidelines from p. 8 of the Toolkit
  - Sections of the Equal Voice for America's Families National Family Platform
  - Selections from the various "Read up on ..." in the High-Priority Issues section (Toolkit pp. 13–21) and/or the Additional Resources section (Toolkit pp. 34–35).

### The day of

- Consider going over the guidelines for creating a "safe space" for dialogue (Toolkit p. 8).
- Be prepared to suggest next steps, and have materials available for attendees to follow up.