



# YPAR in School

## Research That Drives Change

Lesson adapted from:  
YPAR Hub. (n.d.). *Using Research for Change*. <http://yparhub.berkeley.edu/get-started-lessons/using-research-for-change/>



### Objectives

To understand how research can help you advocate or make a better argument

To see how other groups have used research for change

### Activity: Using Research to Make an Argument

#### Materials

- Chart paper, whiteboard or chalkboard
- Markers, dry erase markers or chalk
- Skit scenario 1, 2, and 3 worksheets (1 copy)
- Other scenarios
- Public Science Project PAR video

#### Pre-Activity

Brainstorm a definition of research.

#### Activity

Split the participants into three teams. Each team will have to plan out a skit using scenarios in which research is used to make an argument.

Each skit has to answer the following questions:

- What is the problem they are addressing?
- What is their solution?
- How did they use research to advocate for their solution?

After ten minutes each team presents its skit to the entire group.



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### Reflection

- ❑ Why do you think these groups used research in their campaign for changing their community?
  - Example: Helped them prove their point.
  - Example: Made them better advocates (e.g., knew their constituency, the opinions of people they were trying to represent).
  
- ❑ What kind of research was best for making a solid argument (e.g., video evidence, surveys, statistics, interviews)? Why?

### Summarize

Sometimes research can help us better understand the problem. It can also help others to understand our point.

### Demonstrate

Get back into the same teams from your role play. As a team, write down three different issues, problems, or topics that are important in your community.

For each problem or issue, come up with an idea that would help improve the problem. For each issue, what do you need to know more about to help understand it?

Share your answers in the larger group.

### Assessment

What is one advantage of doing research?  
Why can research help us create change?



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## **Skit Scenario #1: Californians for Justice**

### **Background:**

Californians for Justice is a group uniting communities of color, and young people to advocate for public policy change in California. In July 2003 several hundred youth, parents, and advocates from all across California converged on Sacramento to protest unequal school conditions and the High School Exit Exam. Californians for Justice packed the meeting of State Board of Education to tell them that all students deserve a quality education and to advocate to end the High School Exit Exam.

Members of the Campaign for Quality Education used their surveys and Report on California Schools to testify about poor conditions in their schools, experiences of English learners, and students with disabilities.

The State Board was visibly moved, and the President of the Board said it was “the most powerful testimony he had heard in... years.”

The Result? The Board holds vote and decided to delay starting the high school exit exam for 2 years.

### **Potential characters:**

Youth, parent, adult advocates, state school board members.

### **Your skit must answer the following questions:**

- What is the problem Californians for Justice are addressing?
- What is their solution?
- How did they use research to advocate for their solution?

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## Skit Scenario #2: The Poughkeepsie High Survey

### Background:

“The whole thing started out with this one little survey that we never thought would be anything” Ms. McKinney, 17, said. “The way our school runs sometimes, you might think students wouldn’t care as much as they did.”

In Spring 2003, the government class at Poughkeepsie High School in New York did something unheard of: they released a poll to the student body asking what everyone wants to see changed in the school’s budget in the next year.

At the Board of Education meeting, six students of the government class formally presented their report, full of charts, graphs, appendixes, and suggestions. Some highly desired items, like driver’s education courses, had been absent from Poughkeepsie High’s budget for years and board members agreed that they should be reconsidered. Others, like paying students to do school maintenance or pressing troublemakers into janitorial service as a form of detention, were illegal.

At least 5 board members took it upon themselves to congratulate the students and promised to take the survey results into consideration.

The students also discovered that even the superintendent of the school district had always wanted to have student opinion and was pleased and surprised at how seriously the students took it

### Potential characters:

High school students, board of education members, superintendent

### Your skit must answer the following questions:

- What is the problem the government class is addressing?
- What is their solution?
- How did they use research to advocate for their solution?

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## **Skit Scenario #3: East Los Angeles Youth Organizers**

### **Background:**

Joshua, a student from Garfield High describes conditions at his school: “Most of our classes have 40 students in them; you have to sit way in the back with no tables, and some students have to stand up because there’s no room for them. It’s very stressful. Tiles are falling off the ceilings, and lunch is in a little area where you can’t really sit down. Usually, only one or two bathrooms are open for 4,800 students, and they’re in horrible condition.”

Another East LA high school student describes her experience also: “My friends in the lower [non—college-prep] classes have unaccredited teachers, while we have accredited ones. We would have college counselors come into the classroom, but only the military recruiters would come into theirs. Things like that should be given throughout the school, not only to a small percentage of students! I don’t want to see my friends have to stay behind or drop out of school, join the military, or work as low-wage labor at a Jack-in-the-Box.”

This is what they did. Joshua and students from different high schools in East LA formed InterCity Struggle in order to organize change in their schools. InterCity Struggle merged with another youth organization, called United Students. “We believe any young leader has the capacity to become the director of this organization,” says Luis Sanchez, executive director of InnerCity Struggle. First they had to come up with hard research to prove that the problems existed, so they put together a survey for the students. Then they held a student-led meeting with the principle to share their results. They won the principal’s support.

In weekly three-hour evening sessions at InnerCity Struggle headquarters, the US leaders go through a three-month intensive training on media literacy (learning how media like newspapers and TV works). “We learned that a small percentage of big companies control everything that we see on television,” says Joshua. “They don’t really say the truth if it’s going to lose money.”

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## **Skit Scenario #3: East Los Angeles Youth Organizers**

### **Background (continued):**

It worked! “The school superintendent allocated \$20 million into improving school conditions. We’ve had a lot of interviews on the radio, and with the L.A. Times. We’re so young, but we’ve done so much and it feels good.”

### **Potential characters:**

Youth organizers,  
adult facilitators,  
school principal,  
superintendent,  
the media

### **Your skit must answer the following questions:**

- What is the problem InnerCity Struggle is addressing?
- What is their solution?
- How did they use research to advocate for their solution?

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## Research That Drives Change **Other Scenarios:**

### **Newscast Scenario:**

Channel 9 is covering a protest against police brutality that community members are holding in front of the police chief's office. The people protesting claim it is a serious problem in their neighborhood.

There are several people at the protest who claim they have experienced police brutality and are willing to be interviewed by Channel 9.

The protestors have several videotapes of police brutality in West City to the news station.

**Potential Characters:** News reporter, news anchor, protestors, police, abused community members

### **Trial Scenario:**

Big City files a class action suit against Yeasty Yeast Factory on behalf of West City youth with asthma. (West City is a low-income neighborhood in Big City.) They want to shut Yeasty Yeast Factory down because of the pollution and bad smell it creates.

An expert witness on Environmental Health is at the trial. He knows that: the yeast factory is ranked the second worst toxic air polluter in Big City; and rates of asthma in West City are twice as high as the rest of Big City County and three times higher than the state of California.

A young person with a bad case of asthma who lives near Yeasty Yeast Factory is also at the trial. They believe they have asthma because of the fumes from the factory.

**Potential Characters:** Expert witness, youth with asthma, prosecuting attorney, defense attorney, judge, bailiff

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## Research That Drives Change **Other Scenarios, cont.:**

### **Public Policy Scenario:**

Public Advocates (a non-profit research group) releases a poll of over 100,000 people that says that 75% of Californians are unhappy with the public education system.

The same Californians who reported being unhappy said that they would prefer that the California budget give more money to schools than prisons.

In response to this information, the Governor is holding a press release about a new law he is making to address their concerns.

**Potential Characters:** Governor, the Governor's Chief of Staff, reporters, citizens, other politicians

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