



YPAR in School

Understanding Institutional Change

Lesson adapted from:
YPAR Hub. (n.d.). *Institutional Change*. <http://yparhub.berkeley.edu/get-started-lessons/institutional-change/>



Objective

To build understanding of institutional change
To brainstorm actions to reflect institutional change

Activity: Changemakers & Changestoppers

Materials

- Lamont and Lilly situation sheet (1 copy)
- Sonya situation sheet (1 copy)
- Rene and Rachel situation sheet (1 copy)
- Changestopper, Changemaker skit (8 copies)

Pre-Activity

Have students write about the following prompt in their process journals:

Give three examples of institutions that impact your life.

Activity

Today we are going to look at how our actions can change institutions instead of blaming the people impacted by these institutions. Let's introduce two kinds of people — the Changemaker and the Changestopper.

Changemakers connect problems to root causes and to institutions. Changestoppers blame people for their problems. Most of us move back and forth between these two types of people.



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Activity: Changemakers & Changestoppers

Activity (Continued)

Ask for 8 volunteers to do a skit, and give each of them a Changestopper, Changemaker skits sheet. Have 4 volunteers perform the first skit, then have 4 volunteers perform the second skit.

Divide class into 3 groups. Each group will receive a situation sheet: either Lamont and Lilly, Rene and Rachel, or Sonya. They should complete the questions on the sheet, prepare a skit to demonstrate Changemakers and Changestoppers, and be prepared to discuss the answers to their questions.

Reflection

After each skit ask:

- How did the Changestopper see the problem?
- How did the Changemaker see the problem?
- What institution did they connect it to?
- Are there other institutions that this problem could be connected to?
- According to the Changestopper, what is the cause of this problem?
- According to the Changemaker, what is the cause of this problem?
- For each person, how would they try to solve this problem?

After all skits ask:

- Why does it often seem easier to be a Changestopper than a Changemaker?



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Summarize

Victim-blaming is common in our society. It is easier to blame someone for their circumstances because then it doesn't affect us and we don't have to do anything about it. It's easy to say "Work harder" or "I made it, why can't you?" This fits with our dominant culture's belief in the American Dream. But, once we look at the root of the problem, we can see that there is a deeper cause, a fundamental problem that must be solved if we want the system to be different for everyone.

Activity: Connecting to the Research Issue

Activity

Get into groups of 4-5. In groups, brainstorm a scenario that fits your research issue and question. The scenario should demonstrate what a Changestopper might think and what a Changemaker might think. For example, if your issue was the impacts of trauma on young people, when a student seems to exhibit signs that might be a response to trauma, a Changestopper might look to actions related to increasing the punishment for those behaviors, a Changemaker might do one of many things — lead an assembly on trauma and how trauma impacts youth, a campaign to share information to teachers about the signs of trauma in youth, or a close look at young people's thoughts about response to trauma.

What did the Changemakers see as the root causes? What types of actions did they come up with? Were all of them creating institutional change?



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Activity: Connecting to the Research Issue

Activity, continued

Just because change is not victim-blaming doesn't make it institutional. It's possible to create change that helps individuals but does not change the conditions that create the problem — in fact, many organizations take actions that are not institutional. For this research question, we want to make sure to take actions that lead toward institutional change, even while helping those most impacted by this problem.

Assessment

Have students answer the following questions in their process journals:

- Which change that you heard today do you like the best?
 - What about it do you like?
- How likely is it to change the conditions at our school?

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Understanding Institutional Change **Skit Scenario #1: Lamont and Lilly**

In your group, answer the questions below and be prepared to discuss your answers with the class. Also, you will prepare a skit that demonstrates this situation.

Lamont and Lilly are 9th graders. Lamont is in an advanced math class, and Lilly is in a less advanced math class. Lamont sometimes teases Lilly for being in the less advanced class.

One day, Lamont is teasing Lilly. Lilly gets upset and begins fighting with Lamont. Just as the fight starts, the principal walks by. He blames the students for fighting and tells them both they have detention.

Your skit must answer the following questions:

- Who is the changestopper or changestoppers here? Who do they blame?

- What would a changemaker say is the root of the problem?

- What are three institutional changes that could happen here?

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Understanding Institutional Change **Skit Scenario #2: Rene and Rachel**

In your group, answer the questions below and be prepared to discuss your answers with the class. Also, you will prepare a skit that demonstrates this situation.

Rene and Rachel are in 10th grade. After school, they usually walk together to the corner store just down the street from school. They stand on the corner and hang out with other youths.

One day, Rene gets an older kid to buy her some liquor. She and Rachel drink a lot of it. Just then, some other youth come by and try to start a fight. There is a lot of yelling but no physical violence. A police officer stops by, sees what is happening, and takes the entire group to the station.

Your skit must answer the following questions:

- Who is the changestopper or changestoppers here? Who do they blame?

- What would a changemaker say is the root of the problem?

- What are three institutional changes that could happen here?

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Skit Scenario #3: Sonya

In your group, answer the questions below and be prepared to discuss your answers with the class. Also, you will prepare a skit that demonstrates this situation.

Sonya lives in a neighborhood that is across the city from her high school. Her bus often breaks down or is late. She also has to drop off her little brother at school before she goes to hers. She is regularly late to her first period class.

Today, when Sonya got to school late, the attendance clerk yells at her and reluctantly gives her a pass to her class. On her way to class, security stops her. They ask to see her pass and accuse Sonya of forging it. Security escorts her to class. When Sonya's teacher sees her, the teacher tells her to go back to the office because she has already missed too much class. The teacher wants Sonya to see her counselor and drop the class.

Your skit must answer the following questions:

- Who is the changestopper or changestoppers here? Who do they blame?
- What would a changemaker say is the root of the problem?
- What are three institutional changes that could happen here?

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Understanding Institutional Change Changemaker & Changestopper Skits

1. Homelessness

Homeless person walks around and asks people for money.

Narrator: When a changestopper sees a homeless person, they think...

Changestopper: That person must be lazy – they aren't working, they're begging. I bet they are just going to use the money for liquor. They seem drunk.

Narrator: When a changemaker sees a homeless person, they think...

Changemaker: When that person had hard times, there was nowhere that would help them. I bet they lost their home when they lost their job. The City should have services that help people with their rent when they lose their job or get sick.

Narrator: The Changestopper blamed the person for their problem. The Changemaker connected the problem to an institution – the city government.

2. Pollution

Resident stands on stage and coughs.

Resident: The sky is so black and the air is so thick today. I feel like I can hardly catch my breath. I'm having more and more days like this these days.

Narrator: When a changestopper drives through this neighborhood, they think...

Changestopper: Why would anyone live in this awful neighborhood? It's so dirty. Why don't they clean it up?

Narrator: When a changemaker sees this neighborhood, they think...

Changemaker: The company should stop its plant because it is polluting the neighborhood. The smoke in the air makes the building and streets dirty.

Narrator: The changemaker connected the problem to an institution.

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