



**Civics 9-12 Curriculum on School  
Closure in NYC  
Includes Teacher Resources and  
Student Handouts**

# Unit: Civics through School Closure in New York City

## Desired Outcome

### Established Goals:

See New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies and New York State Common Core Learning Standards for Reading and Writing.

### Understandings: *Students will understand that...*

1. School closings are complex, controversial, and critically important because of the importance of public education in society.
2. Data can be used to tell many different stories
2. Being an active citizen/activist means taking action to address the issues affecting you and your community

### Essential Questions:

1. What do we hope schools/education does for communities and individuals?
2. Why is the New York City Department of Education policy to close instead of fix failing schools?
3. Why are various groups (students, parents, teachers, communities) for/opposed to closing schools?
4. How will schools closing affect various groups (students, parents, teachers, communities) in the short and long term?
5. What is my responsible in relation to the school closing as a New York City resident and NYC public school student?

### *Students will know/Students will be able to...*

1. The New York City Department of Education rationale for closing schools
2. The reasons that various groups (students, parents, teachers, communities) support and oppose school closings
3. How the New York City Department of Education uses data to measure the success/failure of public schools
4. How data can be used to justify the closing of a school
5. Conduct research into one public school closing and create a visual, text, or multi-media presentation to tell the story of the closure.

## Assessment Evidence

### Performance Tasks:

Include but not limited to:

1. Students will write a paper that uses the evidence from class readings and videos to explain their position on school closings.
2. Create a visual, text, or multi-media presentation to tell the story of the closure.

### Other Evidence:

1. Teacher observations
2. Daily in class discussion engagement and participation
3. In-class journal reflections

## Learning Plan

### Learning Activities:

See attached Learning Plan

# Learning Standards

## New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies

### **SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARD 5 CIVICS, CITIZENSHIP, AND GOVERNMENT**

**Students will: use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the necessity for establishing governments; the governmental system of the U.S. and other nations; the U.S. Constitution; the basic civic values of American constitutional democracy; and the roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship, including avenues of participation.**

#### **Standard 5, Key Idea 3**

Key Idea 3: Central to civics and citizenship is an understanding of the roles of the citizen within American constitutional democracy and the scope of a citizen's rights and responsibilities.

Performance Indicators--Students will:

- understand how citizenship includes the exercise of certain personal responsibilities, including voting, considering the rights and interests of others, behaving in a civil manner, and accepting responsibility for the consequences of one's actions (Adapted from The National Standards for Civics and Government, 1994)
- analyze issues at the local, state, and national levels and prescribe responses that promote the public interest or general welfare, such as planning and carrying out a voter registration campaign
- explore how citizens influence public policy in a representative democracy

#### **Standard 5, Key Idea 4**

Key Idea 4: The study of civics and citizenship requires the ability to probe ideas and assumptions, ask and answer analytical questions, take a skeptical attitude toward questionable arguments, evaluate evidence, formulate rational conclusions, and develop and refine participatory skills.

Performance Indicators--Students will:

- take, defend, and evaluate positions about attitudes that facilitate thoughtful and effective participation in public affairs
- consider the need to respect the rights of others, to respect others' points of view (Adapted from The National Standards for Civics and Government, 1996)
- participate in school/classroom/ community activities that focus on an issue or problem
- prepare a plan of action that defines an issue or problem, suggests alternative solutions or courses of action, evaluates the consequences for each alternative solution or course of action, prioritizes the solutions based on established criteria, and proposes an action plan to address the issue or to resolve the problem
- explain how democratic principles have been used in resolving an issue or problem

## Common Core Learning Standards

### **READING STANDARDS FOR LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES 6–12**

#### **Key Ideas and Details**

- RH11-12.2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

- RH11-12.3. Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

#### **Craft and Structure**

- RH11-12.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines faction in Federalist No. 10).
- RH11-12.6. Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence.

#### **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas**

- RH11-12.7. Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- RH11-12.9. Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

### **WRITING STANDARDS FOR LITERACY IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES, SCIENCE, AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS 9-12**

#### **Text Types and Purposes**

- WHST11-12.1. Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.
  - a. Introduce precise, knowledgeable claim(s), establish the significance of the claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that logically sequences the claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.
  - b. Develop claim(s) and counterclaims fairly and thoroughly, supplying the most relevant data and evidence for each while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both claim(s) and counterclaims in a discipline-appropriate form that anticipates the audience's knowledge level, concerns, values, and possible biases.
  - c. Use words, phrases, and clauses as well as varied syntax to link the major sections of the text, create cohesion, and clarify the relationships between claim(s) and reasons, between reasons and evidence, and between claim(s) and counterclaims.
  - d. Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.
  - e. Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from or supports the argument presented.

#### **Production and Distribution of Writing**

- WHST11-12.6. Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

#### **Research to Build and Present Knowledge**

- WHST11-12.7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
- WHST11-12.8. Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.
- WHST11-12.9. Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

## Learning Plan

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
<p><b>Topic:</b> Purpose of schooling</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Describe why we educate the United States</p> <p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Journal Reflection: What do we expect education/schools do for communities? Individuals?</li> <li>2. Class Discussion: Share reflections, compile student responses</li> </ol>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Defining Failing/Successful schools</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Understand the terminology used to label a school as failing/successful</p> <p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Journal Reflection: How do you define a failing school? How do you define a successful school?</li> <li>2. Class Discussion: Share reflections, compile student responses</li> <li>3. Reading on use of the term "failing schools"</li> </ol>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Introduction to School Closures in New York City</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Describe the debate around school closures in New York City.</p> <p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review list of school closures</li> <li>2. Class Discussion: Student connections and observations to list of schools.</li> <li>3. Journal Reflection: Why do you think schools are being closed? Who benefits from schools closing? Who loses when schools close?</li> <li>4. Class Discussion: Share reflections, compile student responses</li> </ol>	<p><b>Topic:</b> NYC Department of Education Rationale for School Closure</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Explain the justification the NYC Department of Education is giving for closing failing schools</p> <p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Video: Bloomberg on school closure policy</li> <li>2. Reading on school closure policy</li> <li>3. Class Discussion: Student responses to video and reading</li> <li>4. Complete handout on pros/cons school closure</li> </ol>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Opposition Rationale against School Closure</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Identify the various groups opposed to school closures and their objections.</p> <p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Video: Opposition to school closure policy</li> <li>2. Reading on school closure policy</li> <li>3. Class Discussion: Student responses to video and reading</li> <li>4. Complete handout on pros/cons school closure</li> </ol>
Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
<p><b>Topic:</b> Impacts of School Closure</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Describe the effects of school closings on students</p> <p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reading: Executive Summary of Urban Youth Collective Report on school closures</li> <li>2. Class Discussion</li> <li>3. Fill in handout on effects of school closure.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Impact of School Closure</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Describe the effects of school closings on teachers</p> <p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Video: UFT position on school closures</li> <li>2. Reading: Teachers impacted by school closure</li> <li>3. Class Discussion</li> <li>4. Fill in handout on effects of school closure</li> </ol>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Impact of School Closure</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Describe the effects of school closing on communities</p> <p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Video: Community response to school closure</li> <li>2. Reading: Community impacted by school closure</li> <li>3. Class Discussion</li> <li>4. Fill in handout on effects of school closure</li> </ol>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Argument paper on school closure</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Write a strong argument paper on school closure using evidence from class resources.</p> <p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write an argument paper taking a strong position for or against school closure. Use resources from class and follow guidelines for Common Core Learning Standards.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Peer Edit Argument paper on school closure</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Edit one of your classmate's papers on school closure.</p> <p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Edit the paper of someone else in class. Provide feedback on the paper using the peer edit handout.</li> <li>2. Revise your own paper in response to your peer edits.</li> </ol>

## Learning Plan (continued)

Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15
<p><b>Topic:</b> Analyzing NYCDOE Data</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Describe how the NYCDOE uses data to grade a school.</p> <p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Journal Reflection: If you were to grade a school, what criteria would you use? Why?</li> <li>2. Class Discussion</li> <li>3. Analyze the grade data for your school using the NYCDOE website and the New York Times Schoolbook</li> </ol>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Generating Alternative Data Measures</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Create alternative measures for grading a school.</p> <p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Journal Reflection: What information from the school reports do you find relevant? What additional information would you wish to include? What information can you not capture with numbers?</li> <li>2. Class Discussion:</li> <li>3. Reading: Alternative Assessments for schools</li> </ol>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Individual School Research</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Research a school that is slated for closure in New York City and create an alternative plan for the school.</p> <p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Find the Educational Impact Statement (EIS) for your closing school.</li> <li>2. Critically examine the EIS, NYCDOE, Schoolbook, and other sources of information about your school.</li> <li>3. Create a visual that uses data to present an alternative plan for the school.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Individual School Research</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Research a school that is slated for closure in New York City and create an alternative plan for the school.</p> <p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Critically examine the EIS, NYCDOE, Schoolbook, and other sources of information about your school.</li> <li>2. Create a visual that uses data to present an alternative plan for the school.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Topic:</b> Individual School Research Presentation</p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Present your research and recommendation to the class.</p> <p><b>Activities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Class presents alternative plans for school closure.</li> <li>2. Write a final reflection on the overall unit, what you learned, what you liked and how it can be improved.</li> </ol>

## Teacher Resources:

### **Day 2: Defining Failing/Successful Schools**

- Use of the term “failing schools”: <http://federaleducationpolicy.wordpress.com/2011/04/14/historic-use-of-the-term-failing-school/>
- School Improvement Grants and Failing Schools: <http://gothamschools.org/2010/04/30/feds-give-new-york-300-million-to-fix-failing-schools/>

### **Day 3: Introduction to School Closures in New York City**

- See Handout: School Closure List
- Reading and map of school closures from 2012: <http://www.thirteen.org/metrofocus/2012/05/mapping-nyc-school-closures-and-openings/>
- Reading on 2013 list of school closures: <http://www.ny1.com/content/education/175109/doe-marks-total-of-26-schools-for-the-chopping-block>

### **Day 4: NYC Department of Education Rationale for School Closure**

- See Handout: School Closure Debate
- Video: <http://blip.tv/teachers-college-columbia-university/kossoff-lecture-on-education-policy-featuring-nyc-public-schools-chancellor-dennis-walcott-5072576>
- Reading: <http://www.aei.org/article/education/k-12/charter-schools/a-tale-of-two-schools-what-new-york-department-of-education-is-getting-right/>

### **Day 5: Opposition Rationale Against School Closure**

- Video: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ulr8Bv\\_T0Vw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ulr8Bv_T0Vw)
- Reading: <http://cityroom.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/01/07/city-names-17-schools-slated-to-close/>
- Podcast: <http://www.npr.org/2013/03/23/175104850/race-poverty-central-to-national-school-closure-debate>
- Reading: <http://morecaucusnyc.org/2013/03/10/protest-school-closings/>
- Reading: <http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2013/03/14/nycs-m14.html>

### **Day 6: Impacts of School Closure (students)**

- See Handout: Effects of School Closings
- Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYPUcCXqufQ>
- Reading: <http://www.urbyouthcollaborative.org/105/uyc-releases-report-on-school-closings/>
- Reading: <http://www.urbyouthcollaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/No-Closer-to-College-Report.pdf>

### **Day 7: Impacts of School Closure (teachers)**

- See Handout: Effects of School Closings
- Video: <http://pix11.com/2013/03/15/nyc-teachers-union-prez-slams-bloomberg-on-closing-of-schools/>
- Video: <http://vimeo.com/8931307>
- Reading: <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/teachers-bushwick-community-high-school-troubled-students-protest-plan-close-school-fire-teachers-article-1.1015616?localLinksEnabled=false>
- Reading: <http://www.uft.org/campaigns/school-closings-petition>

### **Day 8: Impacts of School Closure (communities)**

- See Handout: Effects of School Closings
- Reading and Videos on Parent response to closure of Harlem Choir Academy. <http://newyork.cbslocal.com/2013/01/08/proposed-nyc-school-closings-have-parents-furious/>
- Report: <http://annenberginstitute.org/pdf/SchoolTransformationReport.pdf>
- Reading: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jason-duchin/the-school-closure-moveme\\_b\\_3021598.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jason-duchin/the-school-closure-moveme_b_3021598.html)

### **Day 9: Argument paper on School Closures**

- Common Core Learning Standards Rubrics: [http://www.schoolimprovement.com/docs/Common%20Core%20Rubrics\\_Gr11-12.pdf](http://www.schoolimprovement.com/docs/Common%20Core%20Rubrics_Gr11-12.pdf)

### **Day 10: Peer Review of Argument paper on school Closures**

- Handout: Peer Edits

**Day 11: Analyzing NYCDOE data**

- Reading: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/02/nearly-one-fifth-of-nyc-e\\_n\\_1932857.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/10/02/nearly-one-fifth-of-nyc-e_n_1932857.html)
- New York Times Schoolbook: <http://www.schoolbook.org/>
- New York City Department of Education Progress Reports: <http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm>

**Day 12: Generating Alternative Data Measures**

- Reading: <http://www.nyccej.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/school-closures-report.pdf>
- Video: [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education/jan-june11/schools\\_06-06.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/education/jan-june11/schools_06-06.html)
- Reading: <http://educationalaspirations.com/2013/02/10/achievement/>

**Day 13: Individual School Research**

- Education Impact Statement for Choir Academy: <http://schools.nyc.gov/NR/rdonlyres/BF115982-FF79-4522-AA19-1F9BE2F133D8/139667/ChoirHSPOEISAMENDEDFINAL2.pdf>
- Possible Digital Tools for Final Products:
  - Prezi: alternative presentation web-based program: <http://prezi.com/>
  - Visual.ly: allows you to tell stories with data: <http://visual.ly/>
  - Piktochart: interactive visuals and data presentations: <http://piktochart.com/>
  - Easel.ly: create and share visual ideas online: <http://www.easel.ly/>



## School Closure List

### 26 Proposed School Phase-Outs, Closures (2013)

#### **Manhattan**

High School of Graphic Communication Arts (phase out)  
M.S. 45/S.T.A.R.S. Prep Academy (closure)  
Choir Academy of Harlem (phase out)  
Bread & Roses Integrated Arts High School (phase out)  
J.H.S. 013 Jackie Robinson (phase out)  
Academy for Social Action: A College Board School (Middle School phase out)

#### **The Bronx**

M.S. 203 (phase out)  
Herbert H. Lehman High School (phase out)  
P.S. 064 Pura Belpre (phase out)  
Jonathan Levin High School for Media and Communications (phase out)  
M.S. 142 John Philip Sousa (phase out)  
Performance School (phase out)  
P.S. 230 Dr Roland N. Patterson (phase out)  
P.S. 050 Clara Barton (phase out)

#### **Brooklyn**

Freedom Academy High School (closure)  
P.S. 167 The Parkway (phase out)  
J.H.S. 166 George Gershwin (phase out)  
J.H.S. 302 Rafael Cordero (phase out)  
Sheepshead Bay High School (phase out)  
General D. Chappie James Middle School of Science (phase out)  
P.S. 174 Dumont (phase out)  
P.S. 073 Thomas S. Boyland (phase out)

#### **Queens**

P.S. 140 Edward K Ellington (phase out)  
Law, Government and Community Service High School (phase out)  
P.S. 156 Laurelton (Middle School phase out)  
Business, Computer Applications & Entrepreneurship High School (phase out)

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#### **D.O.E. Criteria for Struggling Schools**

"Proposals for phase-out are the culmination of a thoughtful and thorough process," said Devon Puglia, a department spokesperson, and school closures are a last resort.

Schools get on a watch list when they receive a grade of D, F or a third consecutive C on the annual school progress reports. A school also gets flagged for early engagement when it receives a poor rating on its quality review, a qualitative evaluation of how well the school supports student achievement, or if it is listed as a low-performing "priority school" by the state education department.

To get off the list, the D.O.E. said, it applies other criteria. A school that earns the highest rating on its quality review, even if it receives a low progress report grade, would likely escape the early engagement list. Or if a school's graduation rates or proficiency test scores were higher than the citywide average it would more likely be removed from the early engagement list. If none of those criteria fall in the school's favor and the city proposes it for closure, then the decision is explained in reports posted on the [D.O.E. website](#).

## School Closure Debate Handout

Reasons the NYCDOE wants to close schools

Reasons people are against closing schools

## Effects of School Closings

Reflect on the readings and class discussion to record your thoughts on the impacts of school closings on students, teachers, and communities.

Impacts on Students

Impacts on Teachers

Impacts on Communities

Other Impacts

## Peer Edit Handout

Author \_\_\_\_\_

Editor \_\_\_\_\_

Version \_\_\_\_\_

In your peer edit meeting, try to answer the following questions about the paper:

1. What is the argument the author is making in the paper?
2. What evidence do they use to support this argument?
3. What sources did the author use in their paper? How did they use these sources?
4. Do you find the paper convincing? Why or why not?
5. Was there anything confusing in the paper? If so explain.
6. What was your overall impression of the paper? Why?
7. What suggestions do you have for the author to improve their paper?