

SCHOOL YARD PROTEST



SCHOOL YARD PROTEST

Lesson Summary

In this session, your group will look at the different ways that students have organised protests in their own schools in South Africa and the UK against policies they considered unfair.

Learning Objectives

- To learn about the protests led by students at Pretoria High School and Isca.
- Academy in Exeter, and to appreciate the different reasons behind these students' campaigns.
- To reflect on how the visual 'brand' of a campaign can increase the attention it receives.

United Nations Sustainable Development Links

- Quality Education
- Reduced Inequality

Curriculum Links

- Citizenship
- English
- Personal Social and Health Education

British Council Core Skills

- Digital Literacy
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Creativity and Imagination
- Student Leadership
- Collaboration and Communication
- Enterprise



SCHOOL YARD PROTEST

Activity One: Discussion

Requires: White/black/smart board

Preparation: Write up the three questions on the board

Begin the session by writing the following questions on the board:

1. How is the student voice represented in your school?
2. Do you know who you would you speak to if you wanted to suggest changes in your school?

The aim of these questions is to encourage students to think about their own roles as active participants in the school community, the various representative structures and points of contact that they have, and the effectiveness of using them.

Activity Two: Pretoria Girls High protests

Requires: Slides 2 and 3, Worksheet sources 1 and 2

Preparation: Ensure that the videos from slide 2 can be played, print out worksheet sources 1 and 2.

- Inform the students about the protests at Pretoria Girls High in August 2016 using the slides and the information below.
 - In August 2016, students at Pretoria Girls High School protested against their school's policies on hairstyles. Black students claimed that they were being forced to straighten their hair, and that 'afro' styles were being called improper by teachers and staff at the school. They resented being told that their natural hairstyles were considered messy, and the suggestion that they should use potentially damaging chemical products to make their hair conform to school standards. A petition launched online called on the government to get the school to change its policies and garnered 25,000 signatures within a day.
- Show the students the two short videos from slide 2, and inform the students that the young women's protests were successful in changing the school's policy.
- Break the group into smaller groups of 3-4. Ask each student read the extract from The Washington Post (source 1) and look at the image in source 2.
- Ask them to address the questions from slide 2 in their small groups, before bringing the group back together to share their answers.



SCHOOL YARD PROTEST

Activity Three: Isca Academy protests

Requires: Slides 4 and 5, worksheet sources 3 and 4.

Preparation: Print out the sources from the worksheet.

- Explain to students that in June, 2017, Isca Academy became the centre of national news when its students decided to protest against school uniform policies at the height of a heatwave. Tired of not being allowed to wear shorts, over 30 boys wore skirts to school, getting national media attention. Their protest was featured on television news programmes and made the pages and websites of most national newspapers. Eventually the school reversed its policy, allowing shorts to be worn in summertime.
- Show students the video on slide 4, and inform the students that these students also successfully managed to change their school's policy on dress codes.
- Ask students to read source 3 and look at the image in source 4. Ask the group as a whole to answer the questions on slide 5.

Activity Four: Roleplay- planning a campaign

Requires: Paper and pens of different sizes.

- Inform the students that you have received an announcement from the head teacher. To encourage better grades, the school will be reducing lunchtime by half an hour, and will replace it with an extra lesson. Ask your students what they think of this- is it fair?
- How might they try to change this policy?
- Encourage them to think about the different channels they could go through (eg using the student council, meeting with teachers, talking with parents, sharing their grievances with other students. Ask them to think about what other suggestions might, draw attention to their situation.
- After each group has made their plan, ask them to present it to the rest of the class, encouraging discussion and feedback from all students.

Partner School Activities

If you are working with a partner school you could:

- Share ideas and thoughts from your discussions or have a shared debate on an online platform.



SCHOOL YARD PROTEST

Source 1

Extracts from an article, which looks at why young women in Pretoria reacted to their school's hair policy.

In recent years, staff members at the prestigious Pretoria High School for Girls in South Africa had taken to telling black students to “fix” their hair, according to some current and former pupils. Exactly what “fix” meant depended on who was issuing the order, the young women said: Some were told to use chemical straighteners, while others got a reminder about the school rule limiting cornrows, dreadlocks and braids to a centimetre or less in diameter.

Last month, propelled by the long-simmering belief that such criticisms were discriminatory, a group of current students took action. Protests were staged on the leafy, gated campus over the hair fracas.

...After thousands signed an [online petition](#) supporting the Pretoria students, the head of Gauteng province's education department met with students, parents and staff at the school this week to hear the students' claims. The department later ordered the code of conduct clause dealing with hairstyles to be suspended.

Krista Mahr, for the Washington Post

[Click here for article.](#)



SCHOOL YARD PROTEST

Source 2

This image shows a student who helped to organise the protests in Pretoria.



(<https://mobile.eurweb.com/2016/08/south-african-girls-protest-school-policy-forcing-straightened-hair-pics-video/>)

SCHOOL YARD PROTEST

Source 3

Extracts from an article about the protests at Isca Academy

Teenage boys wear skirts to school to protest against 'no shorts' policy.

When the Isca academy in Devon opened on Thursday morning, an estimated 30 boys arrived for lessons, heads held high, in fetching tartan-patterned skirts. The hottest June days since 1976 had led to a bare-legged revolution at the secondary school in Exeter.

As the temperature soared past 30C earlier this week, the teenage boys had asked their teachers if they could swap their long trousers for shorts. They were told no – shorts weren't permitted under the school's uniform policy.

When they protested that the girls were allowed bare legs, the school – no doubt joking – said the boys were free to wear skirts too if they chose. So on Wednesday, a handful braved the giggles and did so. The scale of the rebellion increased on Thursday, when at least 30 boys opted for the attire.

The school said it was prepared to think again in the long term. The headteacher said: "We recognise that the last few days have been exceptionally hot and we are doing our utmost to enable both students and staff to remain as comfortable as possible.

"Shorts are not currently part of our uniform for boys, and I would not want to make any changes without consulting both students and their families. However, with hotter weather becoming more normal, I would be happy to consider a change for the future."...

The mother of one of the boys who began the protest said she was proud of him. Claire Lambeth, 43, said her son Ryan, 15, had come home earlier in the week complaining about the heat. "He said it was unbearable. I spoke to a teacher to ask about shorts and she said it was school policy [that they could not be worn].

"Ryan came up with the idea of wearing a skirt, so that evening we borrowed one. He wore it the next day – as did five other boys

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/jun/22/teenage-boys-wear-skirts-to-school-protest-no-shorts-uniform-policy>



SCHOOL YARD PROTEST

Source 4

An image of the students' protest at Isca Academy which was used by many different newspapers and websites.



(BBC/ Apex)

THANKS TO FUNDERS AND PARTNERS:



MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Written and compiled by Dr Daniel Edmonds: danieledmonds237@gmail.com

