
Sample Lesson 13: The East LA Blowouts: An Anchor to the Chicano Movement

Theme: Social Movements and Equity

Disciplinary Area: Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x Studies

Ethnic Studies Values and Principles Alignment: 4, 5, 6

Standards Alignment:

CA HSS Analysis Skills (9–12): Chronological and Spatial Thinking 1–3; Historical Interpretation 1, 3, 4

CA CCSS for ELA/Literacy: RH.9–10.2, 3, 4; WHST.9–10.4, 8, 9

CA ELD Standards: ELD.PI.9–10.1, 2, 5, 6a, 9

LESSON PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW:

This lesson will introduce students to the East Los Angeles student blowouts (or walkouts) of 1968 and the Chicano Movement. They will have an opportunity to explore the range of student response to discrimination and injustices that were manifesting in public education. At the onset, students will engage in critical dialogue and inquiry about early Chicana/o/x youth and social movements, and conclude the lesson by drawing connections to current injustices and issues confronting Chicana/o/x and Latina/o/x Americans in schools.

Lesson Objectives (Students will be able to ...):

- Gain a better understanding of root causes of protests and uprisings
- Articulate the history of the East Los Angeles student blowouts and the Chicano Movement, with a focus on key leaders, movement demands, and outcomes

Essential Questions:

1. How did the students from East Los Angeles respond to discrimination and injustice within the educational system, and to what extent did it lead to change?
2. How were the East Los Angeles blowouts and the broader Chicano Movement connected to the same root causes?
3. How is transformative social change possible when working within existing institutions, such as the public school system?
4. What is the role of education, and who should have the power to shape what is taught?

Lesson Steps/Activities:

1. Open the class by displaying the following excerpt from the Los Angeles Times article “East L.A., 1968: ‘Walkout!’ The day high school students helped ignite the Chicano power movement”:

LOS ANGELES—Teachers at Garfield High School were winding down classes for the approaching lunch break when they heard the startling sound of people—they were not sure who—running through the halls, pounding on classroom doors. “Walkout!” they were shouting. “Walkout!”

They looked on in disbelief as hundreds of students streamed out of classrooms and assembled before the school entrance, their clenched fists held high. “Viva la revolución!” they called out. “Education, not eradication!” Soon, sheriff’s deputies were rumbling in.

It was just past noon on a sunny Tuesday, March 5, 1968—the day a Mexican American revolution began.

2. Proceed to ask students why they think students at Garfield were shouting “Walkout,” and what the phrases “Viva la revolución!” and “Education, not eradication!” mean. In pairs, students discuss the above questions, later sharing their thoughts with the entire class. Following discussion, provide definitions for the following terms: protest, eradication, revolución, uprising, Chicano, Brown Berets, and unrest. Then instruct students to read “East L.A., 1968: ‘Walkout!’ The day high school students helped ignite the Chicano power movement.”
3. After giving students about 15 minutes to read the article and discuss their immediate reactions in think, pair, and share format, proceed to write down on the board any questions students may have about the article and respond to them.
 - a. To supplement the article, play a short video clip on the youth movement: “The 1968 student walkout that galvanized a national movement for Chicano rights.”
4. Following the screening, lead a discussion about how the students experienced police aggression and were even targeted with federal charges for “invoking riots.” Be sure to emphasize that the students were resilient and persisted in other forms of protest by organizing their peers and parents and attending school board meetings where they presented a list of demands.
5. Hand each pair a copy of the two primary sources listed below.

“Student Walkout Demands” proposal drafted by high school students of East Los Angeles to the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) Board of Education

No student or teacher will be reprimanded or suspended for participating in any efforts which are executed for the purpose of improving or furthering the educational quality in our schools.

Bilingual–Bicultural education will be compulsory for Mexican-Americans in the Los Angeles City School System where there is a majority of Mexican-American students. This program will be open to all other students on a voluntary basis.

In-service education programs will be instituted immediately for all staff in order to teach them the Spanish language and increase their understanding of the history, traditions, and contributions of the Mexican culture.

All administrators in the elementary and secondary schools in these areas will become proficient in the Spanish language. Participants are to be compensated during the training period at not less than \$8.80 an hour and upon completion of the course will receive in addition to their salary not less than \$100.00 a month. The monies for these programs will come from local funds, state funds, and matching federal funds.

Administrators and teachers who show any form of prejudice toward Mexican or Mexican-American students, including failure to recognize, understand, and appreciate Mexican culture and heritage, will be removed from East Los Angeles schools. This will be decided by a Citizens Review Board selected by the Educational Issues Committee.

Textbooks and curriculum will be developed to show Mexican and Mexican-American contribution to the U.S. society and to show the injustices that Mexicans have suffered as a culture of that society. Textbooks should concentrate on Mexican folklore rather than English folklore.

All administrators where schools have majority of Mexican-American descent shall be of Mexican-American descent. If necessary, training programs should be instituted to provide a cadre of Mexican-American administrators.

Every teacher's ratio of failure per students in [their] classroom shall be made available to community groups and students. Any teacher having a particularly high percentage of the total school dropouts in [their] classes shall be rated by the Citizens Review Board composed of the Educational Issues Committee.

"Student Rights" proposal drafted by high school students of East Los Angeles to the Board of Education:

Corporal punishment will only be administrated according to State Law.

Teachers and administrators will be rated by the students at the end of each semester.

Students should have access to any type of literature and should be allowed to bring it on campus.

Students who spend time helping teachers shall be given monetary and/or credit compensation.

Students will be allowed to have guest speakers to club meetings. The only regulation should be to inform the club sponsor.

Dress and grooming standards will be determined by a group of a) students and b) parents.

Student body offices shall be open to all students. A high grade point average shall not be considered as a prerequisite to eligibility.

Entrances to all buildings and restrooms should be accessible to all students during school hours. Security can be enforced by designated students.

Student menus should be Mexican oriented. When Mexican food is served, mothers from the barrios should come to the school and help supervise the preparation of the food. These mothers will meet the food handler requirements of Los Angeles City Schools and they will be compensated for their services.

School janitorial services should be restricted to the employees hired for that purpose by the school board. Students will [not] be punished by picking up paper or trash and keeping them out of class.

Only area superintendents can suspend students.

6. After reading the primary source documents, proceed to have the pairs construct what their own demands would be if they were to organize a presentation to the Board of Education on flip chart paper. Once the pairs have completed their own demands, then task the students with responding to the following reflection questions related to the primary sources listed above:
 - a. What student demand do you think is the most important, and why?
 - b. What is one student right you would add to this list?
 - c. Which student rights and/or demands do you view as less important, and why?
 - d. The East Los Angeles Walkouts were led by students. Do you think they would have been more effective if they had been led by teachers or other adults? Why or why not?
 - e. What do you think happened after the East Los Angeles Walkouts?
 - f. What is happening in the US currently that relates to the 1968 East Los Angeles Walkouts?
 - g. What other youth-led movements have occurred within contemporary US history?

-
- h. Beyond walkouts, what are other ways students can best advocate for themselves?
 7. Finally, each pair is given the opportunity to present their proposed student demands and response to the question in step 6(h) to the entire class.

Assessment, Application, Action, and Reflection:

- Students will show understanding of the content by discussing and responding to the questions provided.
- Students will create a presentation of demands on how to improve schools in their district.

Materials and Resources:

- “East L.A., 1968: ‘Walkout!’ The day high school students helped ignite the Chicano power movement” <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link125>
- PBS “Los Angeles Walk Out” <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link126>
- KCET “East L.A. Blowouts: Walking Out for Justice in the Classrooms” (“Student Walkout Demands” and “Student Rights” primary sources are embedded.) <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/cr/cf/ch4.asp#link127>
- Mario T. Garcia and Sal Castro. 2014. *Blowout!: Sal Castro and the Chicano Struggle for Educational Justice*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.