

#NoCopAcademy 30-minute or Less Lesson:

Use the reading below (or excerpts from it). Choose any combination of questions to create the activity that meets your students' & classroom needs.

Option 1: Reading Comprehension (use only the first half of the article for this exercise).

- 1) According to the author, who should grown-ups be listening to when talking about stopping gun-violence?
- 2) How much money does Mayor Rahm Emanuel want to spend on a new police-training academy?
- 3) Where does Rahm Emanuel want to build the police training academy?
- 4) Why does Rahm Emanuel want to build it?
- 5) Why don't students/young people want the police academy built? What do they want instead?

Option 2: Primary Source Analysis

- 1) Who is the author of this source?
- 2) When was this source written?
- 3) Where was the source published and what kind of article is it? (news, sports, opinion, etc)
- 4) Whose voices/perspectives do we hear in this source? Why?
- 5) Whose voices/perspectives don't we hear in this source? Why?
- 6) How would we get those voices/perspectives? What other sources would we need to do that?

Option 3: Reading Response

- 1) The author argues that the city should listen to young people to create solutions to the city's gun violence. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?
- 2) The author argues that a \$95 million police training academy will not solve the city's gun violence problem. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

Option 4: Rhetorical Analysis

- 1) The author argues that a \$95 million police training academy will not solve the city's gun violence problem. Is the author successful in making this argument? Why? Explain what rhetorical and argumentative skills the author uses to make her claim.

Reading:

“City officials should listen to young people in debate over new police academy”

[Dahleen Glanton](#), Contact Reporter, *Chicago Tribune*, Nov 14, 2017

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/columnists/glanton/ct-met-youth-activists-police-dahleen-glanton-20171113-story.html>

In the last six years, more than 160 young people under the age of 17 have been shot to death in Chicago. More than 1,550 others have been wounded in shootings.

Isn't it time grown-ups started listening to what young people have to say about stopping the gun violence?

If anyone took the time to ask them, they would say unequivocally, “Invest in our future, not our incarceration.”

Last week, Mayor [Rahm Emanuel](#) and the Chicago City Council turned their backs on our youths once again. The decision to spend \$95 million — money the city doesn't actually have — on a new police training academy in West Garfield Park shows just how tone-deaf our elected officials are. [Chance the Rapper](#) tried to drill some sense into council members before they voted 48-1 to jump start the project with a \$10 million payment for the land. But these politicians seemed hellbent on following [Donald Trump](#)'s playbook on addressing violence: Lock 'em up and throw away the key.

Emanuel says the facility would spur economic growth on the West Side and make the entire city safer. Officials also claim that the investment in police training is a step toward fixing the problems outlined earlier this year in the U.S. Justice Department's scathing report on police misconduct in Chicago. Indeed, these are issues that must be addressed in our city. But it is hard to buy the argument that spending \$95 million on a building is the best way to go about it.

A month before the City Council vote, Chicago students of color who form the racial justice group Voices of Youth in Chicago Education, or VOYCE, held a news conference to explain why spending millions on a police academy is a bad idea.

One young person after another stepped up to the microphone set up in front of a church a few blocks from the proposed site of the academy to make a case for how the money could be better utilized. No crowds from the neighborhood came to hear them, though every now and then someone would drive by in a car and give a honk. There were no elected officials present and no television cameras, only teenagers speaking from their hearts.

Nancy Ramirez, a 17-year-old senior at Roosevelt High School, talked about her brother, who was shot to death two years ago at the age of 15.

He wasn't killed late at night, she said. It happened during the day, when the teenager had no safe place to be.

“If there was an after-school program, a job or just some type of safe space for him to be after school, then maybe my brother would be graduating with me in 2018,” she said.

“This situation could have been prevented if we could have invested in more resources for my community to provide survival opportunities. But instead, all we hear is that we don’t have the funds.

“Yet you are investing in a \$95 million police academy. You don’t need a new building to teach how not to kill our people. But you do need jobs and opportunities in our low served communities to save our lives.”

Across Chicago, young people have been relentlessly lobbying city and state officials to consider innovative ways to solve the problem of gun violence. At the same time, they have worked to address the so-called school to prison pipeline, by limiting the amount of contact students have with law enforcement and the judicial system while enrolled in school.

Two years ago, the group successfully lobbied to pass [Illinois Senate Bill 100](#), which made school suspensions and expulsions the last resort, rather than the first response. This year, however, the group failed on Senate Bill 704, which would have required school districts to reallocate funds used for school-based law enforcement officers to alternative programs. Instead of hiring more police officers inside the schools, money would be spent on hiring school psychologists and social workers, drug and alcohol treatment services and training school staff on conflict resolution techniques and other disciplinary alternatives.

At a VOYCE summit in late October that drew hundreds of youths from across Chicago, participants overwhelmingly opposed the police academy. They advocated instead for more mental health clinics and services, accessible jobs for community members and turning vacant houses and buildings into community centers and affordable housing.

These are not complicated proposals. If only a portion of the \$95 million the city plans to spend on the police academy were devoted to such projects, the young people say Chicago could see a drastic reduction in the city’s homicide numbers.

Young people have the most at stake in putting an end to the gun violence that is wiping out part of an entire generation. Our youths have some great ideas about how stop this carnage, but they need the help of grown-ups.

The next time Emanuel and the City Council decide to spend millions of dollars we don’t even have on violence prevention, it might be a good idea to listen to what the people targeted by the violence have to say.

It’s hard to believe that most people in West Garfield Park — the neighborhood with the highest violent crime rate in the city, would say — “Great idea, Mr. Mayor! A \$95 million police academy is exactly what we need to keep our children out of harm’s way.”

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