

Will They or Won't They? Teacher Strike

SUBMITTED BY: Lee Jackson

SUBJECT(S): Management

GRADE LEVEL(S): 9, 10, 11, 12

≡ OVERVIEW:

This lesson introduces students to the mechanics of a labor strike, as well as its causes and effects. Students will explore the interconnectedness of labor unions and policy, as well as their influence on business.

≡ NBEA STANDARD(S):

- Management, VII. Organized Labor

Common Core Standard(s):

- Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection and research

Objectives/Purposes: Following this lesson, students will be able to describe the role of organized labor and its influence on government and business.

Knowledge@Wharton Article: [“Labor Pains: Is Industrial Unrest Growing or Slowing?”](#)

Other Resources/Materials:

- Whiteboard, chart paper, markers, photos
- West Penn Teachers' Strike video:
http://www.myfoxphilly.com/dpp/news/education/042610_North_Penn_Teachers_Strike
- Catholic School Teachers' Strike video: <http://abclocal.go.com/wpvi/video?id=7071937>

Activity 1:

1. Open the class by having students read the article. (5 mins).
2. Allow them to discuss the key points from the article. (10 mins)

Key point from the article: Strikes, killings and closings are all framed in resistance to pay, working conditions and other worker concerns.

Questions to generate discussion:

How is a teachers' strike similar to the unrest of workers in the article?

Possible answer: All groups worked together in an attempt to reach a goal; outcomes were not always positive, either for the workers or their employers.

3. Share key terms with students. (5 mins)
 - **Organized labor** – An association of **workers** united as a single, representative entity for the purpose of improving the workers' economic status and working conditions through collective bargaining with employers.
 - **Collective bargaining** – This is a process of negotiations between employers and the representatives of a unit of employees aimed at reaching agreements.
 - **Vertical Union** – A labor union that admits all workers in a given industry irrespective of their craft.

Activity 2:

1. Role-play (15 mins)

Have students role-play during a teachers' strike. Divide students into several groups. Each group will represent individuals impacted during a teachers' strike. (See below.) Have students in each group write a brief scenario based on one of the perspectives listed below. Ask students to

consider: How might this person feel? What are the pressures faced by this individual as a result of the strike? Consider community, financial and personal concerns when completing the scenario.

Background. Sawgrass City Schools is the largest school district in the state. It has over 500,000 students, 13,000 teachers, and thousands of other support personnel. Since 2005, SCS has been operating with a budget of approximately \$1 billion. Union negotiators brought demands to the SCS School Board, which included:

- Increasing retirement and pensions from 1% annually to 2%
- Paid sick leave
- A 3% pay increase for the following school year

2. Closing (5 mins):

Discuss as a group — What were some of the things that the students considered as they represented the different parties? How does collective bargaining impact contract negotiations?

- **Teacher.** Uncertain about missing work; happy with current contract, but wishes that sick days were paid for; feels as if he/she is abandoning his/her responsibilities to the school; has a day off.
- **Student.** No school today, but still has to get younger siblings to daycare and a charter school. Not sure when school will resume.
- **Parent.** Has to go to work today and isn't sure how to get childcare for his elementary-aged children. Unsure of how long the standoff will last.
- **Representative from the School District.** Receiving calls from parents, teachers and principals about the strike, which is costing the city over \$3 million per day in lost revenue; state standardized tests are only a few days away; budget is stretched to the limit.

Practice Outside of the Classroom: Have students investigate a recent strike in their area. What was being negotiated? What was the outcome?

What Worked and What I Would Do Differently: Students really liked role-playing and thinking about the strike from different perspectives. This was a time-intensive activity, so moving through the key terms quickly was necessary. It was fine for the students to refer to their notes throughout the class.

Sources: <http://www.investopedia.com/terms>

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