



CULMINATING ACTIVITY: ACT FROM THE HEART

(Time varies)

OBJECTIVE

Students use evidence to emphasize a point, recognize the relationship between goal, action, and outcomes. They also demonstrate an understanding of democracy as a process.

MATERIALS

Act From The Heart handout

GET READY

- ✓ Make a copy of the *Act From The Heart* handout for each of your students.

INSTRUCTIONS

- ✓ Have your students read the *Act From The Heart* handout describing how the Clearys worked to increase safety on college campuses.
- ✓ Engage your students in a discussion on the Clearys' work (using the discussion questions provided).
- ✓ Encourage your students to learn more about the Clearys' work and Security On Campus by going to <http://www.campussafety.org>.
- ✓ Tell your students that they will have the opportunity to choose an issue of importance to them and then figure out a way to impact that subject; they will learn about a problem, just as the Clearys did, and then determine how they can make a difference. Say the following to the students: *A nationwide survey of junior high and high school students found that drunk driving, depression and teen suicide, guns at school, improving schools/ education, discrimination, violence in school, drugs, self-esteem, AIDS, and abuse at home*

are teens' top 10 concerns. List the 10 causes on the board and then ask your students if there are any other issues they would add to this list.

- ✓ Have your students divide into groups of four or five. Have each group choose from the list the topic most important to them. In class or for homework, have the groups write about their topic; they should state the topic of interest, what they already know about this topic or issue, and various questions to guide their learning.
- ✓ The next day, provide time for your students to pursue learning about their chosen topic via library resources, the Internet, calls to community agencies, and surveys of students in the school or adults in the community.
- ✓ Have each group share with the class what they have learned about their issue.
- ✓ Brainstorm with your students ways they can use the democratic process in order to impact the problems they researched (letter writing to local and national office holders, petitioning, lobbying, etc.).
- ✓ Give the groups time to develop strategies for their topics that make use of the democratic process. Have the groups share their favorite ideas with the class.
- ✓ Ask the groups to implement one of their ideas for making a difference. Allow for a specified amount of time to pass and then ask your students to share with the class what they have done in respect to the issue/cause they selected.



CULMINATING ACTIVITY: ACT FROM THE HEART (continued)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- ★ *What, in the Clearys' minds, were the needs for campus crime disclosure acts.*
- ★ *Describe the goals that Connie and Howard Cleary had in mind when organizing their information service, Security On Campus.*
- ★ *The Clearys' efforts resulted in a very important federal law. What exactly does this law do?*
- ★ *What amendments were made to the law since its first passage?*
- ★ *What were some of the challenges the Clearys had to overcome to get their law passed?*
- ★ *What does this story tell you about what people can accomplish in a democracy?*
- ★ *What issue did your group target? What did you and your group accomplish?*



ACT FROM THE HEART

In 1987, the parents of Jeanne Cleary received an out-of-court settlement from Lehigh University over their lawsuit accusing the school of failing to protect their daughter, who as a freshman, was raped and murdered in her dorm room one year earlier. Using this money, the grieving parents organized a nonprofit information service called *Security On Campus*, with the hope of bringing about awareness of campus violence in the U.S. The Clearys' research showed that 57 violent acts are committed every day at America's colleges and universities and that the governing bodies, (sometimes called Boards of Regents), often used their powers to hide incidents of crimes committed by and against students. Statistics that indicated that as many as one out of 10 women become rape victims during their college years, and the fact that 90% of these crimes involve alcohol, made the Clearys determined to do something. They decided to find a legal way to force colleges to disclose crime information in an effort to reduce campus violence.

They began their work at the state level, realizing that passing a federal law would be especially difficult since it is state laws that deal with most crimes. Colleges are typically state or private institutions that are regulated by the states. By 1988, through fact gathering and lobbying they had their first success. *The Pennsylvania College and University Security Information Act* was passed by the legislature in that state. Ten more states soon followed with similar laws requiring colleges to report crime statistics. Those who failed to do so were told that they would lose state funding. As each state wrote its own version of the legislation, some even adding criminal charges for failure to disclose information, it became evident that uniform codes would make it easier for the public to understand the data and to put it to use in deciding which schools were safest to attend.

The Clearys pointed out that a federal law would make it possible to compare crime rates across state lines. Since it is necessary that proponents of federal legislation demonstrate the need for state consistency, this fact became significant to their efforts at the national level. In addition, the Clearys also pointed out that if a state did not pass its own information act it could easily become a haven for violent student offenders.

The Clearys found two U.S. senators willing to introduce into Congress a federal bill called the *Student Right to Know*

and Campus Security Act. To emphasize its seriousness the federal law would include a penalty limiting federal school funding if a university or college violated the act. Opponents voiced their fear that the government's intervention into higher education institutions would be too costly, might encourage misunderstanding of statistics and might possibly hurt the reputation of the schools involved. In spite of these objections the bill passed unanimously in both houses of the U.S. Congress.

When the U.S. Department of Education threatened schools with loss of federal funds if they *did not* comply with the new law and open their police records, opponents of the legislation claimed that such action publicized confidential education records. They also said that the federal government had no right to intrude into state and local matters. In an ensuing two-year battle Congress eventually negated the lobbying effort of the opponents of the law by amending the original bill to declare campus law enforcement records as unprotected, non-confidential education information.

Through the year 2000, additional amendments have been attached to *The Student Right To Know Bill*, broadening the reporting of sexual assaults, expanding crime categories, adding hate crimes to the list, and making available information concerning sex offender registration on campus. The Clearys' dream, to ensure that their daughter's life not be in vain, has come true and continues to make college life safer for millions of students across the United States.

Two concerned parents working with friends and allies conducted the research, collected the data, wrote letters to the editor, appeared before the media, contacted legislators first in the state of Pennsylvania, and then in other states and prevailed in getting state laws passed. They learned how the judicial system in the United States works and, citing the need for consistency, convinced members of the Congress of the United States of the validity of their position. They were confronted by powerful interests such as various Boards of Regents, university bureaucracies, and people who dislike federal intervention into state issues. Their diligence and hard work paid off and demonstrates how much power individuals in a democracy have.