



MIDDLE SCHOOL | UNIT 2

Getting Paid

Title

The Compulsory Education Act

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- **research** compulsory education laws and income statistics in their states.
- **examine** the correlations between more education and available jobs and income.
- **explain** how compulsory education laws impact individuals, businesses, and society in their states.

Content Area

Social Studies

Grades

6–8

Overview

Should the government play a role in determining how many years you are in school? Students will discuss the concept of compulsory education and participate in an inquiry activity on compulsory education laws and how they relate to education and income. They will explore the impact/benefits on individuals, businesses, and society as a whole. Groups of students will share their findings with the class.

Themes

Personal Finance: Income and Careers

Social Studies: Civics, Economics

C3 Framework for Social Studies Standards:

D2.Civ.13.6-8: Analyze the purposes, implementation, and consequences of public policies in multiple settings.

D2.Eco.1.6-8: Explain how economic decisions affect the well-being of individuals, businesses, and society.

Key Terms

Financial Literacy: income

Social Studies: compulsory education, hypothesis, law, legislation

Pathway to Financial Success

In Schools

Connect

How does this connect to the student?

The fact that students are in school and attend on a regular basis may be influenced by compulsory education laws. These laws make public education mandatory for nearly all children in the United States. Without them many parents may not begin and/or continue their child's education.

How does this connect to careers?

Education Advocate: An education advocate is an expert in education laws, the needs of students, and the educational system. The advocate helps students and families gain access to the best education possible. You can become an advocate by studying education laws and taking courses in college or training academies.

How does this connect to the world?

Expanding access to education has been shown throughout history to improve the quality of life for people. However, not all students in the world have easy access to education, and many young people have to overcome significant obstacles in order to obtain a basic education.

Prepare

Background: Education is often shown to have a positive effect on **income**, or the amount of money a person will earn. Having access to higher-quality education can lead to better job prospects and earning potential. Under the States' Rights provisions in the [Tenth Amendment](#), control and administration of education and educational practices is left up to each state. However, the federal government has enacted the [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) (IDEA), the [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) (ESSA), and other legislation that states must follow while providing educational services. Under this system, rules about **compulsory education** are left to each state. Outlined is the amount of time a young person must be in school, which often includes the age by which children must begin their education, how often students must be in school, and any consequences for the child or parents if a student is not in school.

One might assume that each state has fairly similar laws regarding compulsory education. However, the age at which a student must enroll in school varies widely from state to state. Data from the [National Center for Education Statistics](#) shows that some states require children to begin school at age five while others do not require attendance until age seven. The [Education Commission of the States](#) maintains a [list of all state requirements](#).

In this activity, students will be presented with an overarching or essential question that relates to compulsory education laws. From that, they will work in teams to develop and subsequently prove (or disprove) a **hypothesis**, or an idea they will attempt to prove through research. This form of study is referred to as inquiry-based learning. Rather than providing students with a highly-structured format, they will receive some direction with regard to the topic of inquiry. Students will guide their own exploration of the topic and conduct research on the topic. For those unfamiliar with inquiry-based learning or seeking additional information, [EduTopia](#) offers information and tips.

In the end, it is hoped that students will draw conclusions about why states require education for their citizens. These may relate to the individual such as the connection between how much education a person has and the income they are likely to receive. It could also relate to businesses. If students do not attend school, how would businesses find workers?

Pathway to Financial Success

In Schools

Materials

- **Computer and Internet Access**
- [What Do You Want To Be When You Grow Up? Unit 2 Student Video](#)
- **Research Guide Student Capture Sheet**—one copy per group

Engage

- Ask students:
 - Do you have to be here at school today?
 - If yes, why?
 - Anticipated responses: their parents make them, school consequences for absences, legal consequences for truancy, etc.
 - Do you think the state or federal government should have a say in whether students go to school every day?
 - Does forcing students to attend school impact their future? If so, how?
- Play the [What Do You Want To Be When You Grow Up? Unit 2 Student Video](#).
- Allow students time to discuss the last question again. Does forcing students to attend school impact their future? If so, how? Ask them if their initial responses have changed in light of what they saw in the video.

Teach

- Explain to students that overseeing education is a responsibility of state governments and guaranteed by the Tenth Amendment. While the federal government can force states to enact certain policies, states have the main responsibility to oversee the education of their citizens.
- Define the phrase **compulsory education** (education that is required by the government) for students.
- Share the compulsory education requirements in your state with students using data from the [Education Commission of the States](#) or elsewhere.
- Write or project the essential question on the board: Why do states require young people to go to school?
- Put students in groups of four or five. Share with students that they will participate in an inquiry study in this activity. Let them know that this means they will be responsible for guiding their own learning. Rather than being provided with a series of questions to answer, each group must develop a hypothesis that relates to the essential question.
 - If students need more structure, assign groups to consider one of three categories: benefits to students, benefits to the community or society, and benefits to businesses.
- Provide students with the following articles or links as resources they may use in beginning their inquiry:
 - [50-State Comparison: Free and Compulsory School Age Requirements](#)
 - [Earnings and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment](#)
 - [How Education and Training Affect the Economy](#)
 - [Why Education Matters for Economic Development](#)
 - [Is There Really a 'Skills Gap'?](#)
 - [Compulsory School Attendance Laws](#)

Pathway to Financial Success

In Schools

- Distribute a copy of the **Research Guide Student Capture Sheet** to each group. Invite students to begin their research.
- Direct groups to prepare to share their hypothesis, research, and conclusions with the class. It may be helpful to assign cooperative learning roles in advance.

Conclude

- Allow each group to share their inquiry results.
- Direct students to submit an exit ticket answering the following prompt: Name one impact, benefit, and tradeoff of compulsory education.

Extend

- **Research:** Students can apply the same inquiry to other countries in the world. They could research which countries have compulsory education laws and which do not, and compare their economic opportunities and the general status of the people living in the countries. Using a site such as [Nation Master](#), students can look at a country with a higher length (in years) for compulsory education and one with a lower length. They can then create a hypothesis on how the length of education benefits or harms the economy of the country.
- **Guest Speaker:** Invite your school's principal or another administrator to talk to your class about the impact of compulsory attendance. What processes must the school follow to track student attendance? What reports must they file about students who are absent? Do they ever participate in legal proceedings for students who do not attend school on a regular basis?
- **Family:** Encourage students to ask members of their family how they think going to school did or did not impact their current jobs and incomes. Family members can discuss what they would do differently if they could start over. Students can also ask their family members what advice they have about the student's education.

Research Guide

Directions: Develop a hypothesis related to the essential question. Conduct research to prove or disprove your hypothesis.

Our hypothesis:

Sources of information:

What information did you find that supports or helps prove your hypothesis?

What conclusion can you draw from your research?