



LESSON

Envisioning the Future, Starting Now

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will use the real life experiences of two young men featured in the documentary *All the Difference* to reflect on their plans post-high school and begin thinking about their futures, from college to careers. They will explore tools and strategies to guide this preliminary planning for life beyond high school.

Filed over five and half years, *All the Difference* traces the paths of two promising young men, Krishaun Branch and Robert Henderson, as they navigate their lives in low-income, high-risk communities in Chicago. Statistics predict they will drop out of high school; both graduate and go on to college in spite of all the odds. The film explores the factors in their lives (mentors, teachers, parents and grandparents, role models and community support) that made all the difference. *All the Difference* is part of [American Graduate: Let's Make It Happen](#), a national public media initiative made possible by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to help local communities keep more students on the path to graduation.

This lesson touches on several key concepts presented in *All the Difference* and introduces students and teachers to the accompanying **College Bound Resources**. It is recommended that students and teachers delve into these materials for an extended college/career exploration. Note that the lesson plan does not focus on college as the sole option beyond high school, but allows students to consider other types of educational, training and career pathways.

Accompanying the film are [College Bound Resources](#) that support students and their families, and offer teachers instructional strategies that will help them guide their students on the college/career journey. This lesson plan draws on and references elements of these materials.

- **For Students:** An online, interactive [College Bound Students Handbook](#) intended for first-generation students to use in their college prep and throughout their college careers. The handbook covers such topics as college selection, financial aid packages, time management, networking, academic majors and stumbling blocks.
- **For Educators:** An online, interactive [Facilitators Guide](#) offers strategies and activities for using the film to start conversations with students and help them prepare for their college careers.
- **For Families and Caring Adults:** [Family Tips](#) are tip sheets that offer advice and tips on how to support students and prepare to send them off to college, covering everything from how to throw a trunk party, to financial aid, to what to expect for a college freshman.

Embedded in the College Bound Students Handbook and Facilitators Guide are **31 video clips** that reinforce the stories of the featured young men, with a focus on how they navigate college.

POV offers a lending library of DVDs that you can borrow anytime during the school year—FOR FREE! Borrow ***All the Difference*** to screen in your classroom. Get started by joining our [Community Network](#).

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Describe what their futures might/could look like beyond high school
- Explore the benefits of a college education
- Identify and discuss how to address the potential challenges young people can experience as they prepare for life beyond high school, specifically if college is a goal
- Research college or alternative educational/training/career opportunities for post-high school planning purposes

GRADE LEVELS: 9-12

Note: Though aimed at high school students, this lesson can also be suitable for middle school students who have started to think about their futures.

SUBJECT AREAS

College and Career Preparation
Language Arts

MATERIALS

- Computer
- [All the Difference Facilitators Guide](#) (for your reference)
- [All the Difference College Bound Students Handbook](#) (for students)

ESTIMATED TIME NEEDED

One 50-minute class period, with homework.

FILM CLIPS

Film clips provided in this lesson are from the ***All the Difference College Bound Students Handbook*** (<http://www.pbs.org/pov/allthedifference/college-bound/>).

Clip 1: “*All the Difference: Introduction*” (5:11 min.)

In this clip, executive producer Wes Moore addresses students and introduces the ***All the Difference College Bound Students Handbook***. His introduction is followed by the trailer for ***All the Difference***.

Clip 2: “Aligning Student Strengths and Interests to the Right School Can Make *All the Difference*” (2:35 min.)

This clip features Krishaun Branch as he’s deciding what he’s looking for in a college in order to align his college choice with his career goals.

ACTIVITY

1. Preparation

In preparation for this lesson, we recommend taking some time to review the *All the Difference Facilitators Guide*. Designed for educators, the Facilitators Guide offers tips, strategies, activities, discussion questions, homework assignments and more to help you lead students through the College Bound Students Handbook.

2. Thinking Forward

Invite students to reflect on what their futures might look like. Students can think about the future within the context of a timeline, beginning with their current grade. (If time permits, they might actually create illustrated timelines with visual benchmarks.) Have them think about what they might be doing as they move through high school, then beyond high school and what might come at the end of their timelines—jobs, degrees, books, crafts and so on. Make sure students know that it is fine not to have a particular end in mind, because reflecting and planning also allows a future vision to take shape over time. Invite students to share briefly their expectations/illustrated timelines.

3. College Thoughts

- a) Point out that several students mentioned that college is likely to fit into their post-high school plans. Note that other students talked about the possibility of college or other types of educational/training options.
- b) Briefly acknowledge the benefits of college (Reference: [Facilitators Guide - Chapter 1, Expectations About College, Topic 2: Why College, Which College, and How to Get There](#)). Ask students to add benefits not listed. Be sure to note that college may not be a desired goal for everyone and that there are other types of educational/training opportunities students can think about as they envision their life journeys beyond high school.
- c) Ask students to think about challenges they might face (or are currently facing) when it comes to going to college or putting in place next steps after high school. Record these points.
- d) Let students know that they're going to take steps towards making their futures a reality through a documentary called *All the Difference* and accompanying handbook based on the real-life experiences of two young men from Chicago, Robert Henderson and Krishaun Branch, who were both the first in their families to go to college. Show students **Clip 1**, which is the introduction in the [College Bound Students Handbook – Introduction and Purpose](#). The clip includes a message from executive producer Wes Moore, followed by the film trailer. Have them briefly reflect on the key messages underscored in this segment.
- e) Invite students to reference the clip and their personal experiences to reflect on the challenges they might face when it comes to planning for the future. Discussion prompts can include:
 - How do these challenges play out in future plans?
 - How is it possible to address and overcome those challenges?
 - What guidance and support systems can help students through these challenges?
- f) Introduce the [College Bound Students Handbook](#) to students. Point out that planning for life beyond high school (college, career) is a process and that the handbook provides a helpful

step-by-step framework to guide them through that process over the next several years, using real-life experiences and advice from Robert and Krishaun, who have been through many of the challenges they brought up earlier in the class. Briefly walk through the contents so they become familiar with the important elements of this planning journey on which they will eventually embark. Direct students to the explanation of the optional [Self Scoring](#) tasks in the handbook. Encourage them to complete the tasks and add up their final scores in order to determine their college/career readiness and to begin building plans for their future lives. You can also assign this as a long-term homework assignment.

4. Figuring it Out

- a) Probe with students where the starting point is for thinking about the future. What do they need to do, for example, if college is a consideration? Have students share several ideas.
- b) Show students **Clip 2**, from the [College Bound Students Handbook - Chapter 1, Expectations About College, Topic 2: Why College, Which College, and How to Get There](#). After viewing the clip, ask students to share some of the college-search strategies presented in the segment.
- c) Using the homework assignment at the end of Topic 2 as a framework, instruct students to create, as a class, a list of the top 10 things to consider when thinking about college as a post-high school option. Items might include thinking about what to study and finding schools that address that interest, or meeting college representatives. If college is not an option, students can create a list of tasks one must take if pursuing an alternate educational/career prep route. Have each student share one element from the list that is their first priority and offer one step they will take to begin addressing that element.

5. Homework

(Note that these tasks will require a few days or more to complete; you might want to review via a “check-in” within a set timeframe to monitor how students are progressing):

- **Option A:** Students can conduct preliminary research into and identify up to 10 colleges that jibe with their interests and expectations. Use the [Topic 2 Homework activity in the Facilitators Guide](#), which provides a set of questions students can use to guide this research.
- **Option B:** If students are not thinking about college at this time, but do have ideas for other types of educational/training pathways, they can conduct similar research. Consider modifying the homework activity so that questions reflect these alternatives.
- **Option C:** Students can select one section of the handbook they view as integral to the journey and do some or all of the tasks to help direct their planning processes.

EXTENSIONS/ADAPTATIONS

1. How They Did It

For this activity, reference Chapter 1: Expectations about College, *Topic 1: Thinking About Expectations* in the Facilitators Guide (for teachers) and the College Bound Students Handbook (for students).

Students seeking to map out paths for their futures can learn from others with whom they might share similar experiences (struggles, obstacles, goals, desires, direction). Students identify and interview a family or community member they view as someone who can inform next steps in the educational and career journey. Note that this individual does not need to have graduated from college or followed a traditional educational/career path.

Small student groups convene to write a series of relevant interview questions, which can include those the College Bound Students Handbook addresses: college expectations and choices; support systems; those who inspired and/or mentored them; obstacles/challenges they experienced, tackled and overcame; mistakes they made; how they prepared for their future choices. Students should present a description of whom they interviewed, what they learned and what lessons seemed best to inform steps they will take to frame out their futures. For additional inspiration, students can look at stories from:

- **The Black List: Volume One**
<http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/the-black-list-volume-one>
- **Makers: Women Who Make America**
<http://www.pbs.org/makers/home/>

2. Making and Saving Money

For this activity, reference Chapter 1: Expectations About College, *Topic 4: Financing College* in the Facilitators Guide (for teachers) and the College Bound Students Handbook (for students).

While the emphasis in the film and the accompanying materials is on financing college, learning how to make and save money in life in general is critical. Students might think first about something they need or want in the immediate future and how they plan to acquire it. How much money will they need; how will they get that money (budgeting, saving, earning, spending, investing)? This can be more of a brainstorm task that gets students thinking about what is involved in saving funds and beginning the grander challenge of financing college. Some of the following resources can support this task:

- **Your Financial Plan: Where it All Begins**
Intermediate <http://www.moneyandstuff.info/beta/lessons/1BMoney matters.pdf>
Advanced <http://www.moneyandstuff.info/beta/lessons/1CMoney matters.pdf>
- **What Can I Afford?**
<http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/lessons/afford/index.html>
- **Get Schooled: Money Talks**
https://getschooled.com/dashboard?tag_group=money-talks

3. Practicing the Personal Essay

For this activity, reference Chapter 1: Expectations About College, *Topic 3: Writing the Essay for Your College Application* in the Facilitators Guide (for teachers) and the College Bound Students Handbook (for students).

Students can try their hand at personal essays on topics of their choice. High school students can focus on writing college application essays, if preferred. As part of this process, they can read a variety of high-quality personal essays and think about their components in order to recognize what makes them compelling.

4. Making and Moving Past Mistakes

For this activity, reference Chapter 4: Slips, Stumbles and Getting Up Again, *Topic 2: Managing Crises* in the Facilitators Guide (for teachers) and the College Bound Students Handbook (for students).

All the Difference emphasizes that making mistakes is part of life's journey. Everybody makes them, but the goal is to ensure that those mistakes are not permanently debilitating. Learning how to accept and get past mistakes is critical to moving forward. Students can either write reflections or work in small groups to share brief stories about mistakes they have made and how they tackled them in order to rectify problems and redirect themselves. They can create a set of tips that guides peers through mistake making, with emphasis on the positive outcomes that can emerge from mistakes made.

RESOURCES

The Film

POV: **All the Difference**

<http://www.pbs.org/pov/allthedifference/>

The film's official POV site includes a discussion guide with additional activity ideas and resources.

All the Difference College Bound Resources:

<http://www.pbs.org/pov/allthedifference/college-bound/>

- College Bound Students Handbook
Introduced by Wes Moore and intended for first-generation, college-bound high school students, the handbook covers such topics as college selection, financial aid packages, time management, networking, academic majors and stumbling blocks. The guide was written by Marcia Cantarella, author of *I CAN Finish College: The Overcome Any Obstacle and Get Your Degree Guide*.
- Facilitators Guide
For educators, guidance counselors and college prep programs, the guide offers strategies and activities geared to using the film to start conversations with students and help them prepare for college. It was written by Marcia Cantarella, author of *I CAN Finish College: The Overcome Any Obstacle and Get Your Degree Guide*.
- Family Tips
For parents, guardians and/or other adult family members, these tip sheets offer insight and advice on everything from how to throw a trunk party, to financial aid, to what to expect for a college freshman. Written by Joy Thomas Moore, JWS Media Consulting and executive producer of **All the Difference**.

POV: Media Literacy Questions for Analyzing POV Films

<http://www.pbs.org/pov/educators/media-literacy.php>

This list of questions provides a useful starting point for leading rich discussions that challenge students to think critically about documentaries.

Career Planning

Career Exploration Lessons for Sixth and Seventh Grades

<http://www.learningforlife.org/wp-content/documents/Career-Exploration-Lessons-for-Sixth-and-Seventh-Grades.pdf>

Career Readiness Partner Council

<http://www.careerreadynow.org/>

CareerTech: "Middle School Career Development Lessons"

<https://www.okcareertech.org/educators/career-and-academic-connections/career-information-resources/middle-school-career-development-lessons>

Getting Started: Career/College Planning Guide for Ninth Grade Students

http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/curriculum/careercenter/pdf/gettingstarted_9.pdf

Kids.gov: "Jobs and Careers"

<https://kids.usa.gov/teachers/lesson-plans/jobs/index.shtml>

U.S. Department of Labor: "Career Planning for High Schoolers"

<http://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2015/article/career-planning-for-high-schoolers.htm>

College Prep

ASCD: "What Makes a Student College Ready?"

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct08/vol66/num02/What-Makes-a-Student-College-Ready%C2%A2.aspx>

The College Board: "Big Future"

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/>

Connections Academy: Getting Ready for College: A Four-Year Checklist for High-School Teens"

<http://www.connectionsacademy.com/blog/posts/2012-09-28/Getting-Ready-for-College-A-Four-Year-Checklist-for-High-School-Teens.aspx>

Disabilities, Opportunities, Internetworking and Technology: "Preparing for College: An Online Tutorial"

<http://www.washington.edu/doi/preparing-college-online-tutorial>

Federal Student Aid: "Getting Ready for College or Career School Can Be Easier than You Think"

<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/prepare-for-college>

Get Schooled

<https://getschooled.com/>

I'm First: "Find Colleges"

<http://www.imfirst.org/#colleges>

ideas42: "Nudging for Success: Using Behavioral Science to Improve the Postsecondary Student Journey."

<http://www.ideas42.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Nudging-for-Success-ideas42-FINAL.pdf>

Indiana Afterschool Network: "College and Career Readiness"

<http://www.indianaafterschool.org/quality/workforce-education/college-career-readiness/>

Mapping Your Future: "Success in College Guide"

<http://mappingyourfuture.org/successincollege/sicprint.pdf>

The New York Times: "Tip Sheet: An Admissions Dean Offers Advice on Writing a College Essay"

<http://thechoice.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/06/23/tip-sheet-essay/>

Peterson's: "College Planning Timelines"

<https://www.petersons.com/college-search/planning-list-students-parents.aspx#/sweeps-modal>

Quintessenti: "Next Step After High School? Some Alternatives to College"

<https://www.livecareer.com/quintessential/college-alternatives>

College Alternatives

Forbes: "5 Proud Alternatives to Going to College"

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/robertfarrington/2014/11/10/5-proud-alternatives-to-going-to-college/#5abfb2393343>

The Huffington Post: "How to Build a Successful Life Without a Four-Year Degree"

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/blake-boles/how-to-build-a-successful-life_b_1644107.html

PBS NewsHour: "Why I'm Telling Some of My Students Not to Go to College"

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/im-telling-students-go-college/>

About College

Bloomberg: "Fading College Dream Saps U.S. Economy of Productivity Miracle."

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-09-07/fading-college-dream-saps-u-s-economy-of-productivity-miracle>

The College Fix: "MYTH: More Black Men in Prison Than in College"

<http://www.thecollegefix.com/post/21359/>

FiveThirtyEight: "Race Gap Narrows in College Enrollment, But Not in Graduation"

<http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/race-gap-narrows-in-college-enrollment-but-not-in-graduation/>

One Day Magazine: “Preparing for the College Shock”

<https://www.teachforamerica.org/one-day-magazine/preparing-college-shock>

University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education: “Black Male Student Success in Higher Education”

<https://www.gse.upenn.edu/equity/sites/gse.upenn.edu/equity/files/publications/bmss.pdf>

Organizations

American Graduate: Let’s Make It Happen

<http://www.americangraduate.org/home/>

Getting Smart: “Smart List: 30 Orgs Boosting College Access & Success”

<http://gettingsmart.com/2013/09/smart-list-30-orgs-boosting-college-access-success/>

STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects

(<http://www.corestandards.org/read-the-standards/>)

SL.6.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- SL.6.1.C Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text or issue under discussion.
- SL.6.1.D Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.

SL.6.2 Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text or issue under study.

SL.7.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- SL.7.1.C Pose questions that elicit elaboration and respond to others’ questions and comments with relevant observations and ideas that bring the discussion back on topic as needed.
- SL.7.1.D Acknowledge new information expressed by others and, when warranted, modify their own views.

SL.7.2 Analyze the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how the ideas clarify a topic, text or issue under study.

SL.8.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly.

- SL.8.1.C Pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations and ideas.
- SL.8.1.D Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented.

SL.8.2 Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.

SL.9-10.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

- SL.9-10.1.C Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify or challenge ideas and conclusions.
- SL.9-10.1.D Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.

SL.9-10.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

- SL.11-12.1.C Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.
- SL.11-12.1.D Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

SL.11-12.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

Content Knowledge (<http://www2.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>) a compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum by McREL (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning).

Self-Regulation, Standard 2: Performs self-appraisal.

Grade K-12 Benchmarks:

- 5: Determines appropriate behaviors that are used and should be adopted to obtain wants and/or needs.
- 6: Knows personal strengths and weaknesses and techniques for overcoming weaknesses.

- 8: Understands how hobbies, personal interests and aptitudes can lead to a career.

Thinking and Reasoning, Standard 6: Applies decision-making techniques.

- Grade 6-8 Benchmark 1: Identifies situations in the community and in one's personal life in which a decision is required.
- Grade 9-12 Benchmark 5: Evaluates major factors (e.g., personal priorities, environmental conditions, peer groups) that influence personal decisions.

American School Counselor Association National Standards for Students

(http://static.pdesas.org/content/documents/asca_national_standards_for_students.pdf)

Academic Development

- Standard A: Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills that contribute to effective learning in school and across the life span.
- Standard B: Students will complete school with the academic preparation essential to choose from a wide range of substantial post-secondary options, including college.
- Standard C: Students will understand the relationship of academics to the world of work and to life at home and in the community.

National Standards for Family and Consumer Sciences Education

(<http://www.nasafacs.org/national-standards-and-competencies.html>)

Career, Community and Family Connections, Comprehensive Standard

Integrate multiple life roles and responsibilities in family, work and community settings.

Career, Community, and Family Connections, Standard 1.1

Analyze strategies to manage multiple roles and responsibilities (individual, family, career, community and global).

CREDITS

*This lesson plan includes content adapted from the **All the Difference** College Bound Students Handbook and Facilitators Guide, written by Marcia Cantarella, Ph.D., author of I CAN Finish College: The Overcome Any Obstacle and Get Your Degree Guide • Edited by Anne Llewellyn, Outreach Extensions • Community Engagement Resources • Produced by Judy Ravitz, Outreach Extensions, and executive produced by Joy Thomas Moore, JWS Media Consulting*

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