

# SHOULD HIGH SCHOOLS PRIORITIZE COLLEGE OR WORKFORCE PREPAREDNESS?

**THIS ACTIVITY SHOULD TAKE ABOUT 90 MINUTES. IF STUDENTS ARE ABLE TO REVIEW MEDIA FOR HOMEWORK, IN-CLASS TIME SHOULD BE 45 TO 60 MINUTES.**

## INVESTIGATE

Read, watch, and listen to the three media resources on the [Thinkalong module](#). Students can use the Investigate graphic organizer to summarize each piece of media and record new information. Below are summaries of the three pieces of media curated in the Thinkalong module.

### ONE WORD OR LESS: IS COLLEGE WORTH THE PRICE?

Point Taken | April 26, 2016 | Video  
2:27 minutes

A short video from Point Taken exploring whether the benefits of a college education offset the debt of getting a degree.

- Since the 1970s, demand for college degrees has grown, but higher education wasn't as expensive as it is today.
- Over the past 30 years, the cost of a college education has grown more than 400 percent.
- America's student loans are currently totaled at more than 1.2 trillion dollars.

### HIGH-PAYING TRADE JOBS SIT EMPTY, WHILE HIGH SCHOOL GRADS LINE UP FOR UNIVERSITY

NPR | April 25, 2018 | Audio  
3:54 minutes

A radio story from NPR describing the different paths available to high-school graduates that don't necessarily include college.

- Chris Cortines from the Washington State Auditor's Office coauthored a recent report which found that students are getting funneled into the four-year university track by default, but some struggle and drop out.
- Cortines says students need to be made aware of things like trade schools, associates degrees, and apprenticeships. He says that while a college degree still affords more earning power, there are plenty of fields that don't require bachelor's degrees.
- Kate Kreamer from Advance CTE, a nonprofit focused on career and technical education, says there is still stigma around vocational programs, but there is a huge demand in fields like health science, IT, and manufacturing.
- According to Kreamer, the stigma comes from past perceptions of similar programs where kids who weren't academically prepared were funneled. She says that's no longer the case and people who go into trades discover that their fields are really in demand.
- Jessica Bruce, an apprentice iron worker, says that people don't think trade jobs make as much money as white collar jobs. But her program has no loans or tuition and she gets paid while she learns. Right now, she makes more than \$60,000 per year.

*Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help students to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.*

## SHOWING STUDENTS COLLEGE ISN'T THE ONLY OPTION FOR SUCCESS

NPR Illinois | December 6, 2018 | Audio

4:01 minutes

A story from NPR Illinois that highlights the growing demand for skilled labor and increased funding for vocational education.

- In his recent campaign, Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker talked about increasing state funding for vocational programs, reflecting the national trend demonstrated by Congress's reauthorization of over a billion dollars for training programs.
- Construction trades are expected to grow by more than 7% over the next 10 years. Principal at Capital Area Career Center (CACC) Wes Aymer supports vocational training and says that a career in a skilled profession with a \$25 to \$30-hour salary could support a family.
- Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics supports the argument that a college degree is still more valuable. Their data says that the median weekly wage for workers with a bachelor's degree is still higher than the median for those with an associate's degree or less.
- Kate Blosveren Kreamer from Advance CTE says there is a growing demand for skilled workers. The Illinois State Board of Education is creating a five-year plan for its career and technical programs.
- Eugene Phillips is a high school student studying computer networking at CACC. For Phillips, his training is for college and to gain technical skills. Phillips plans to get a bachelor and master's degree.

### KEYWORDS

Look out for these important keywords in the news stories. Discuss the definitions with your classroom and see how they affect the understanding of the story.

- Apprenticeship
- Workforce
- Vocation
- Debt
- Tuition
- Loan
- New collar
- Career

### CONTEMPLATE

Students will use media literacy questions to critically engage with news by thinking about its purpose, searching for bias and discussing missing perspectives. They will answer the 5 Key Questions of Media Literacy created by the Center for Media Literacy, which are:

1. Who created this message?
2. What creative techniques are used to attract my attention?
3. How might different people understand this message differently than me?
4. What values, lifestyles and points of view are represented in, or omitted from this message?

*Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help students to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.*



5. Why is this message being sent?

A graphic organizer is included in this guide and the Thinkalong website to help students answer these five questions about each piece of media.

## DEBATE

Students will engage their peers in an evidence-based debate using the media they just analyzed. Use the debate tool on the module webpage to help form an evidence-based response to the debate question.

In addition to rich in-class discussions, teachers can also connect with other classrooms through the Thinkalong website. [Sign up here](#) to be connected.

*This program is part of American Graduate: Getting to Work, a public media initiative made possible by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. More at [cptv.org/makingthefuture](http://cptv.org/makingthefuture)*



*Using public media — video, audio and digital reports — about newsworthy topics, these classroom-based exercises help students to think critically about media messages, develop informed opinions, and practice how to take a stand.*

# LET'S INVESTIGATE

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Use this worksheet to help you investigate the media sources in the Thinkalong module.



## SUMMARIZE THE TOPIC

## KEY VOCABULARY

## MEDIA RESOURCE 1

TITLE

DATE PUBLISHED

## MAIN IDEAS

## MEDIA RESOURCE 2

TITLE

DATE PUBLISHED

MAIN IDEAS

## MEDIA RESOURCE 3

TITLE

DATE PUBLISHED

MAIN IDEAS

# CONTEMPLATE YOUR SOURCES

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

After watching the media in the module, answer the questions below.

1. AUTHORSHIP: Who created this message?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

2. FORMAT: What creative techniques are being used to grab my attention?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

3. AUDIENCE: How might different people understand this message differently than me?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

4. CONTENT: What values and points of view are represented? What's left out of this message?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3

5. PURPOSE: Why is this message being sent?

MEDIA 1

MEDIA 2

MEDIA 3



# CREATE YOUR ARGUMENT

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Create strong arguments for both sides from the resources in the Thinkalong module.



DEBATE QUESTION	
PRO ARGUMENT	CON ARGUMENT
REASONING	REASONING
EVIDENCE	EVIDENCE