



Comm Skills Virtual Learning

Legal Communications I & II

Lesson

April 20, 2020



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Objective/Learning Target: Students will explore criminal justice reform initiatives.

Bell Ringer/Let's Get Started

Do you have experience of restorative practices at school? What benefits can you see of such an approach?

Here is an explanation of [restorative practices](#).

Lesson/Activity

What is prison abolition?

Can we abolish prisons? In recent years, many reformers, activists, politicians, prison wardens, and criminal justice theorists have come to the conclusion that our prison system is fundamentally broken and that we should completely rethink the way our society handles crime, punishment, and rehabilitation. They point out that prisons today aren't doing what they were supposedly created to do: Prevent people from relapsing into criminal behavior (called recidivism) and provide an ethical alternative to physical punishment.

Lesson/Activity

Vanessa Hernandez, Education Equity Director of the American Civil Liberties Union in Washington tell us "America's over-reliance on mass incarceration has caused great harm to families and communities, disproportionately affecting people of color, poor people, and people with mental illnesses and disabilities. The U.S. spends \$80 billion a year to keep people locked up, yet it's not clear this has made us any safer. Research shows that isolating people in prisons and jails fails to address the underlying reasons for their crimes and can increase the likelihood they will re-offend.

Read her [argument](#).

Practice

If prisons are abolished, or if the US moves to decarcerate, what are some alternatives. Check out this [article](#) on restorative justice.

After reading the article, create a 3 minute speech in which you advocate for or against the use of restorative justice in the United States. Be sure to offer specific examples. Quote at least two pieces of evidence.

Additional Resources

[Resolution Supporting the Abolition of Prisons](#)

[Restoring Justice](#)