

UNDERCOVER HIGH™

Resource & Discussion Guide

WE ARE **A&E**



“We best learn about each other by walking in each other’s shoes.”

– Topeka School District Superintendent Dr. Tiffany Anderson

UNDERCOVER HIGH

Undercover High features seven young adults, ranging in age from 21 to 26, who embed themselves for a semester in Topeka, Kansas' Highland Park High School. The participants provide an inside look at what it's like to be a teenager today. Each participant has their own personal motivations driving them to help enact positive change – from standing up for LGBTQ students to addressing race and bias in schools and more. The participants, unaware of each other, arrive on campus where only the school administrators and select members of the community know their true identities and the reason for their semester-long stay.

From bullying and the pervasiveness of social media to the struggle to excel in the classroom and navigate evolving social standards, participants discover the challenges and complexities, both new and familiar, facing today's teens. Following thorough background checks, extensive training and ongoing meetings with psychologists, these participants called Highland Park High School their new home for the Spring 2017 semester, befriending students and striving to implement positive changes in students' lives and the school community. This series explores life today for a wide range of teens from a diversity of backgrounds, and can inspire conversations about education, empowerment and community.





Curriculum Links:

Undercover High can be an excellent conversation starter for teachers and parents to discuss issues with teens. It is appropriate for high school students and above. Parents and teachers should be aware that this series touches upon many issues facing young people today including cyberbullying, teen pregnancy, race/ diversity and inclusion, and more. This guide and the accompanying resources are intended to help frame discussions of the themes and topics covered in the series.

Online Resources:

Visit <http://www.aetv.com/shows/undercover-high/exclusives/undercover-high-resources> to find resources and helpful information about many of the issues and topics discussed in this series.

Join the Conversation

Hashtag: #UndercoverHigh

Website: <http://www.aetv.com/shows/undercover-high>

A&E Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/AETV/>

A&E Twitter Handle: @AETV

A&E Instagram Handle: AETV

Pre-Viewing Activity

Before watching, students can discuss the terms below and consider: how do you define these terms? Why are they important? Students may also want to write brief essays about one or more of these terms to share and discuss with their peers.

Community

Connection

Diversity

Empathy

Empowerment

Inclusion

Mentor

Self-Esteem

Stereotype



Discussion Guidelines

These guidelines are useful for facilitating positive, honest and constructive conversations with teens and youth. These conversations can be formal or informal, but the important part is that everyone finds a supportive environment to talk. Parents and educators/facilitators can start conversations by presenting some guidelines formally or informally, and moving the dialogue forward.

- Starting the conversation is the first step. Everyone, especially young people, should feel safe to share their experiences in an open and constructive dialogue.
- Acknowledgment and understanding are key to beginning any conversation.
- Listen first, speak second. Everyone has valuable opinions; let's listen carefully before we speak.
- Don't expect perfection. None of us have the perfect words to describe how we feel. Encourage students to be sensitive to multiple perspectives.
- Empathy is key. While we may not always fully understand each other, we should extend empathy to others.
- Don't just call people out; call them in. Try to build bridges for future conversations, relationships and actions. Try to leave the conversation with everyone feeling more connected than when they started.
- For young people, it can be helpful to talk about emotions, experiences and their personal connections to issues and themes explored in this series.



Discussion Questions for Classrooms

1. Which of the participants or students in this series did you relate to most, and why?
2. Based on what you saw in the series, what kinds of support do students most need to succeed?
3. What is one thing about your life as a teen you wish adults understood more fully?
4. If you had to use three words to describe your school experience what would they be? (Remember to be honest but also constructive.)
5. What are some constructive ways schools can overcome bullying?
6. What are some of the issues students at Highland Park face? What are some of the opportunities they have? How do you think these issues and opportunities are universal to high schools across the country?
7. Do you have a clear sense of how to seek help if you are depressed, are being bullied or are experiencing sexual harassment?
8. What are some of the positive benefits of social media and cell phones? What are some of the downsides of these kinds of technologies?
9. Why do you think some teens feel disconnected or alone? What are some ways to overcome this?
10. How do you think life is different for teens today than it was in your parents or grandparents generation?
11. What do you think is the biggest issue or obstacle facing teens today? What are some ways this can be addressed?

Discussion Questions for Parents & Teens

1. Did you see commonalities between your school experience and the experiences of students at Highland Park?
2. If you had to use three words to describe your school experience what would they be? (Remember to be honest but also constructive.)
3. What do you think are the positive and negative aspects of social media?
4. What social media apps are most commonly used among your friends?
5. Do you have a clear sense of how to seek help if you are depressed, are being bullied or are experiencing sexual harassment?
6. What do you think are the most important things students need to succeed?
7. What are some of the biggest challenges and opportunities for kids today?
8. What surprised you most about watching this series? What did you relate to most?
9. Who do you consider your mentor(s)?
10. Are there kinds of support schools could be offering that aren't available now?
11. Even though high school can be challenging, what did you learn from this series about the value education can bring to your life?

It's On Us: What is Consent?

Undercover High explores sexual harassment and cyberbullying. It's On Us is a national movement to end sexual assault. Visit <http://www.itsonus.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/IOU-Consent-Discussion-Guide.pdf> to view a helpful discussion guide and find additional resources at the end of this guide.

Related Activities

1. **Blueprint for Change.** In small groups, ask students to create an idea for a short video, public service announcement, or social media campaign about an issue relevant to teens or a global issue they care about. What are the key messages of this campaign? What would success look like?
2. **Courageous Conversations.** One theme of Undercover High is the importance of having conversations with each other across various backgrounds and identities. Ask students to think about how they might have a “Courageous Conversation” with someone new at their school. Classrooms can also consider projects in which students interview one another about one of their interests, hobbies, or aspirations.
3. **Cyberbullying Today.** View a one sheet about cyberbullying created by the Anti-Defamation League here: <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/assets/pdf/education-outreach/Bullying-Cyberbullying-Statistics-Overview-One-Sheet.pdf> Educators, parents and teens can review this one sheet together or in small groups and discuss this issue. What pieces of information stand out to you on this one sheet? What are some ways communities can address cyberbullying?
4. **The Race Card Project.** Michele Norris started The Race Card Project to foster conversations about race. Through this platform, users submit their ideas and thoughts about race in six word essays, many of which are featured online. Visit <http://theracecardproject.com/> to learn more.
5. **Spotlight on Social Media.** Social media has benefits and down sides. Ask students to write an essay or op-ed piece about social media and its pluses and minuses for teens today.

Did You Know?

Over 88% of teens have access to a cell phone and 89% use social media. 50% of teens say they are addicted to their mobile devices.

Visit <http://www.aetv.com/shows/undercover-high/exclusives/guide-to-teen-texting> to view some text abbreviations.

Facilitating Conversations about Race, Equity and Implicit Bias

Talking about race and racism can be difficult but important and constructive for students. Educators can help facilitate discussions and will find additional resources at the end of this guide. Below are some definitions for students to review and discuss.

RACIAL INEQUALITY results from discrimination and unequal treatment that occurs as the result of someone's race, including disparity in opportunity for socioeconomic advancement.

STRUCTURAL DISCRIMINATION or **STRUCTURAL RACISM** are terms that define a series of processes, rules and practices in society in which groups of people are denied opportunities and access to resources based on race. Some areas in which structural discrimination and racism have historically been factors: housing, employment, health care, education and criminal justice.

IMPLICIT BIAS refers to the attitudes or stereotypes we all have that affect our understanding, actions and decisions in an unconscious manner. The implicit associations we harbor in our subconscious cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age and appearance. These associations develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages. Please visit this [Kirwan Institute](#) site for more detailed definitions to guide your conversation.

1. What is implicit bias? How do you think it functions in your school and community?
2. What are some ways, even small ones, that racism and implicit bias can be addressed?



CRISIS TEXT LINE |

Crisis Text Line is free, 24/7 support for people in crisis. Text NEED to 741741 from anywhere in the USA to text with a trained Crisis Counselor.

SCHOOL TOOLKIT

Download a Crisis Text Line school toolkit with great resources for your school. <https://www.crisistextline.org/schooltoolkit/>

VOLUNTEER!

Crisis Text Line is powered by over 3,800 volunteer Crisis Counselors who work remotely anywhere with a secure internet connection. Volunteers commit to 200 total hours, serving between 2 and 12 hours each week (yes, it's flexible!) to meet this requirement. Apply now to save lives! <https://www.crisistextline.org/volunteer/>

LGBTQ Students

How can schools create an inclusive environment for LGBTQ students? Many organizations have great resources for facilitating conversations and providing resources for schools and communities.

It Gets Better: The It Gets Better Project's mission is to communicate to LGBTQ youth around the world that it gets better, and to create and inspire the changes needed to make it better for them.

Learn more: <http://www.itgetsbetter.org/>

PFLAG: has been saving lives, strengthening families, changing hearts, minds and laws since 1972. Our family and ally voice is integral to advancing equality. View a helpful glossary of terms and find other resources here:

<https://www.pflag.org/glossary>

GLSEN's mission is to create safe and affirming schools for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. Find helpful resources for educators and more at <https://www.glsen.org/>

Resources for Teens & Parents

These resources can provide help and tools for navigating many of the issues teens face today. Please note that these resources are for information purposes and do not imply endorsement of the series.

MENTAL HEALTH/DEPRESSION

[American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)
[Jed Foundation](#)
[The Aakoma Project](#)
[The Steve Fund](#)
[Code Blue: Mobile App](#)
[What a Difference a Friend Makes](#)

SEXUAL ASSAULT/HARASSMENT

[It's On Us Initiative](#)
[Break the Cycle/Let's Be Real](#)
[Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network](#)

CYBERBULLYING

[Stopbullying.gov](#)
[ADL](#)
[Common Sense Media](#)
[The Bully Project](#)

RESOURCES FOR DISCUSSING RACE, DIVERSITY AND IMPLICIT BIAS

[Teaching Tolerance from SPLC](#)
[The Race Card Project](#)
[Define American](#)
[NAACP](#)
[Advancement Project](#)

VIOLENCE PREVENTION

[Students Against Violence Everywhere](#)
[Sandy Hook Promise](#)
[STRYVE: Striving to Prevent Youth Violence Everywhere](#)
[One Love](#)

LGBT YOUTH

[It Gets Better Project](#)
[GLSEN: Gay/Straight Alliance](#)
[The Trevor Project](#)
[PFLAG](#)

DRUG ABUSE/ADDICTION

[Partnership at Drug Free Kids \(Get personalized support for your family at 855-378-4373; learn more here.\)](#)
[National Institute on Drug Abuse for Teens](#)

TEEN PREGNANCY AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

[CDC: Resources for Parents, Guardians and Teens](#)
[National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy](#)

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT/WELLNESS/HEALTH

[Count Me In](#)
[The Expectations Project](#)
[Born This Way Foundation](#)
[You Matter Blog](#)
[TeensHealth.Org](#)

TALKING TO YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

[Common Sense Media](#)
[Edutopia](#)

LEARNING AND ATTENTION ISSUES

[Understood](#)
[Child Mind Institute](#)